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Daily Report
Near East & South Asia

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Inter-Arab Affairs

Jordanian-Syrian Differences Over Iraq Said Escalating

NC2901164196 Cairo AL-AHRAM in Arabic 27 Jan 96 p 8

[Report by 'Abdallah 'Abd-al-Salam in London]

[FBIS Translated Text] An independent Iraqi opposition figure in London has stressed that differences are escalating between Jordan and Syria over attempts to attract the Iraqi opposition and decide the future government in post-Saddam Husayn Iraq.

In a statement to AL-AHRAM, the oppositionist noted that Jordan has not stopped its moves since King Husayn's visit to London and his meeting with Iraqi opposition factions last summer. He said a seminar held in Jordan two weeks ago on the lessons of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait showed that Jordan has renewed its moves on and interest in Iraqi affairs. One of the reasons behind the lukewarm Iraqi-Jordanian relations, the oppositionist said, is the new Iraqi-Syrian rapprochement and the punishment Iraq imposes on any Iraqi who comes near Jordan.

Iraqi Envoy Meets Arab League Chief on Assets, Syria

NC2901162796 Cairo MENA in English 1520 GMT 29 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Cairo, Jan. 29 (MENA)—Arab League Secretary General Dr. 'Ismat 'Abd-al-Majid today met with Iraqi permanent delegate to the League Ambassador Nabil Najm.

Emerging from the meeting, Ambassador Najm said that he informed Dr. 'Abd-al-Majid of Iraq's demand for releasing 50 million dollars out of the Iraqi assets frozen in some Arab countries in a bid to meet the needs of Iraqi pilgrims this year. The Iraqi delegate said that he discussed with the League's chief the importance of enhancing cooperation between Iraq and Syria regarding the issue of water raised with Turkey.

Palestinian Affairs

Al-Husayni: Negotiating Stand on Jerusalem 'Very Strong'

JN2901161896 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1400 GMT 29 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Faysal al-Husayni, official in charge of the Jerusalem file, said that the Palestinian negotiating stand on the holy city is now very strong, especially after the withdrawal of Israeli occupation forces from large areas in the West Bank. He noted that it is better to negotiate the issue of the city while we are at its doors rather than negotiate it while the Palestinian leadership is outside the homeland.

Commenting on Israel's affirmation that it is not ready to negotiate this issue, al-Husayni said that if it wants to achieve peace, the other side has no choice but to negotiate the issue of the city.

Al-Za'nun Denies Reports PNC Will Convene in Cairo

JN2901162496 Abu Dhabi AL-ITTIHAD in Arabic 26 Jan 96 p 22

[FBIS Translated Text] Amman—QNA [QATARI NEWS AGENCY]—Salim al-Za'nun, acting speaker of the Palestine National Council [PNC], denied reports attributed to a diplomatic source at the Palestinian Embassy in Cairo that the PNC will convene in Cairo soon.

Al-Za'nun said these reports are baseless, adding that all PNC members must enter the Palestinian territories and must obtain their right to legal residence before talking about a PNC meeting. Al-Za'nun noted that the PNC will convene in the Palestinian territories.

'Arafat's Adviser al-Tibi: Covenant To Be Amended Before Israeli Elections

TA3001105496 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1000 GMT 30 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] In an appearance today before senior IDF [Israel Defense Forces] officers at the National Defense College, Dr. Ahmad al-Tibi, PLO Chairman Yasir 'Arafat's political adviser, said that the Palestinian Covenant will be amended prior to the elections in Israel even if they are moved up to May 1996. At the same time, al-Tibi said that the date set for the amendment of the covenant — two months after the Palestinian Council elections — is not sacred and that Israel should not stand around with a stopwatch.

Our correspondent Yoni Ben-Menahem reports that al-Tibi was accompanied by Shaykh 'Abdallah Nimr Darwish, the leader of the Islamic Movement in Israel. Shaykh Darwish expressed the assessment that the majority of the Islamic Movement's supporters in Israel will participate in the upcoming Knesset elections.

Israeli Stabbed by Arab at Janin Joint Liaison Offices

TA3001093196 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0900 GMT 30 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] There has been a terrorist attack in Janin. An Israeli was stabbed and seriously wounded by a local youth at the joint Israeli-Palestinian coordination and liaison offices in the Dotan camp. The victim was transferred by helicopter to a hospital in Israel. Our correspondent Yoni Ben-Menahem reports that the assailant was captured and is currently being interrogated in order to determine how he managed to enter the joint liaison and coordination offices while armed with a knife.

PA, Hamas Officials Comment on Plan To Open Hamas Offices

NC2901140496 Cairo Arab Republic of Egypt Radio Network in Arabic 1245 GMT 29 Jan 96

[Report from "The World on Air" program]

[FBIS Translated Text] The Palestinian Authority [PA] has agreed to open offices for Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] in Gaza and all self-rule areas. Observers view this as a step to advance bilateral cooperation, build Palestinian society and its institutions, and unify the Palestinian rank. Nabil Abu-Rudaynah, official spokesman for Palestinian President Yasir 'Arafat, expressed the hope that the move will deepen inter-Palestinian understanding. He added:

[Begin Abu-Rudaynah recording] As President Abu-'Ammar [Yasir 'Arafat] has always stressed, we open our arms to every faction of the Palestinian opposition to help us strengthen Palestinian national unity. Several Palestinian organizations have official offices and headquarters [in the self-rule areas]. Concerning a license for a Hamas newspaper, the request will go through the necessary legal procedure but, in principle, there is no objection to the opening of a Hamas newspaper office, just as there is no objection to the opening of offices for any Palestinian organizations acting in accordance with Palestinian laws and requirements. [end recording]

Official Hamas spokesman Dr. Mahmud al-Zahhar commented:

[Begin al-Zahhar recording] Hamas informed Yasir 'Arafat that it intends to open an office in Gaza and branches in all the self-rule areas. It also applied for a license to publish a newspaper that explicitly speaks for the movement. I believe Hamas has shown a responsible stance throughout the long months since the Palestinian Authority came to Gaza and later to the West Bank. [end recording]

Hamas Official Vows Opposition to Oslo Accord

NC3001120796 Cairo MENA in Arabic 0902 GMT 30 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 30 Jan (MENA)—Khalid Mash'al, head of Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] Political Bureau, has stated that Hamas believes that the Oslo accord is illegitimate and does not represent the Palestinian people's will. However, Hamas acknowledges that there is a new fait accompli imposed by the international community. He explained that from the beginning Hamas has stated that it will not fight the Palestinian Authority [PA] but will oppose it with all legitimate means. Hamas has ruled out a military confrontation with the PA to save the shedding of Palestinian blood, which is sacred.

In an interview published in the newspaper AL-AHRAM today, Mash'al said the recent Palestinian elections were an attempt to confirm and legitimize the Oslo accord. For this reason, Hamas refused to participate in these elections. It also continues to oppose the accord because it has forsaken the largest parts of our land and practically abandoned the most serious issues—namely Jerusalem, the refugees, crossings, settlements, and sovereignty—by postponing them to the talks on the final status.

Mash'al explained that Hamas considers the final-status talks between the PA and Israel an inseparable part of the Oslo accord. This represents the most serious phase of the accord, because through them Israel aims to normalize its relations with the Arab countries, weaken the PA and strip it of any bargaining capacity, and impose a fait accompli by increasing the number of settlements, annexing Jerusalem, and divesting the refugee and sovereignty issues of any real meaning.

287 Palestinian 'Fighters' To Return From Libya

JN2901200696 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1900 GMT 29 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Approximately 287 fighters from the Libya-based Palestinian forces are to leave Libya for the homeland. Our correspondent quoted informed Palestinian sources as saying that the fighters will be transported from the Egyptian port of Port Said to Palestine via Rafah crossing.

Palestinian Policemen Arrive From Libya to Rafah on Way to Gaza

TA2901190196 Jerusalem Israel Television Channel 1 Network in Arabic 1700 GMT 29 Jan 96

[Announcer-read report]

[FBIS Translated Text] The arrival of the Palestinian policemen who were expected to arrive today in the Gaza Strip has been delayed for technical reasons. Our correspondent Hasan Abu-Zayid reports that 298 Palestinian policemen arrived yesterday from Libya to the Egyptian town of Rafah on their way to the Gaza

Strip. Palestinian sources said that these policemen will join the rest of the Palestinian police force operating in the self-rule areas.

'Arafat Leaves for Sweden To Meet With Officials

JN2901163596 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1400 GMT 29 Jan 96

[Report by 'Adil al-Za'nun in Gaza]

[FBIS Translated Text] President Yasir 'Arafat left the homeland for Sweden today. Nabil Abu-Rudaynah, the president's adviser, said that President 'Arafat will take part in celebrations, which will be held in Sweden, to commemorate late Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme. 'Abu-Rudaynah said that the president will address the audience. The president's adviser said that President 'Arafat will hold a series of meetings there. He is expected to meet with Swedish King Gustaf Carl and the Swedish prime minister and foreign minister to discuss latest developments in the peace process in light of the Palestinian legislative elections and the implementation of the second phase of the Declaration of Principles. The two sides will also discuss Palestinian-Swedish relations and means to reinforce them on all levels. Furthermore, a dinner banquet will be held in honor of President 'Arafat tomorrow.

Hani al-Hasan, Marwan Kanafani, and Nabil Abu-Rudaynah are accompanying President 'Arafat on his visit to Sweden.

'Abd-al-Shafi, 'Ashrawi on Palestinian Elections

TA3001094596 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0800 GMT 30 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] A senior Palestinian Authority [PA] source has said that Dr. Haydar 'Abd-al-Shafi, former head of the Palestinian delegation to the peace talks in Washington, is one of the candidates to head the elected council. In reaction, Dr. Haydar 'Abd-al-Shafi said he does not rule out this possibility.

Our correspondent reports that Dr. Hanan 'Ashrawi criticized the Palestinian opposition for not officially participating in the council elections, asserting that it has lost influence as a result.

Hashim al-Shawwa, director of the Palestine Bank in the territories, said that the banks operating in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip have smuggled approximately $1 billion overseas. Al-Shawwa asserted that this has had a devastating effect on the monetary liquidity of the banks in the territories. Our correspondent Yoni Ben-Menahem reports that al-Shawwa called for the establishment of a central national bank in the territories similar to the banks in Israel. Al-Shawwa expressed the belief that the banks that were set up in the autonomous areas recently neither handle investments nor help local residents.

Female Prisoners Return to Regular Cells at Hasharon Prison

TA3001100296 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0800 GMT 30 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The female Palestinian prisoners in Hasharon Prison have stopped barricading themselves in two cells and have returned to their regular cells. The female prisoners had closeted themselves in two cells to protest Israel's refusal to free five Palestinian women convicted of murdering Israeli citizens.

Algeria

14 Algerians Murdered, 12 Abducted in 'Last Few Days'

LD3001114196 Paris France-2 Teletext in French 1029 GMT 30 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] At least fourteen people have been murdered in Algeria over the last few days, the Algerian press reported on today. Among them were seven women and a little girl, who had had their throats slit and had been mutilated.

The other victims are a field officer, the owner of a brasserie in Kabylie, a mayor, three policemen and an unidentified person. Twelve other people, including four women, have been abducted by armed groups.

Egypt

Egypt's Musa Comments on Nuclear Arms, Peace Issues

NC2901171296 Cairo AL-AHRAM in Arabic 24 Jan 96 p 9

[Report by Farid Wajdi in Dubai: "'Amr Musa: Regions' Future Depends on Balance and Understanding Between Its Countries"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa stressed that the future of the region, and regional arrangements in it, depend on equitability, balance, and understanding between its countries. Any attempt to impose control, hegemony, or to use the existence of nuclear power as a threat is unacceptable, as this would represent a return to square one and to the mentality that prevailed before peace and would cause a massive conflict between the countries of the region.

He said: The nuclear armaments issue does not constitute a problem for any small or major country. If there is an Israeli nuclear program, then there will be other nuclear programs. There can be no objection to any country intending to have a peaceful nuclear program because there are already military ones in the region. In a clear warning, he noted that any talk about a regional order or security without dealing with the Israeli nuclear program is unacceptable. He said that there must be a framework for peace that includes discussion of the Israeli nuclear issue, because it is a serious one, and this should be done through official negotiations, agreement, and implementation. He explained: If a center of power rejects a certain point during the negotiations, then we can reject other points related to disarmament too. Issues like disarmament, arms control, or setting up a regional organization cannot be discussed if Israel does not take action on its nuclear program. He stressed that discussion of these matters requires a clear agreement based on understanding, discussion, and negotiation between all the countries who can formulate an opinion on this issue. He noted that the necessary time for reaching an understanding on the Israeli nuclear and other issues is available.

This came in an interview with Abu Dhabi Television carried out by satellite yesterday morning. PLO Executive Committee member Mahmud 'Abbas, alias Abu-Mazin, also took part in it.

Musa said he is optimistic about Syrian-Israeli negotiations, stressing that the two sides are talking in a way that did not exist before. He also stressed that President Anwar al-Sadat's initiative in the late 1970s was the key to solving the Arab-Israeli conflict, because he used military might and then diplomacy to achieve the Arab objective of Israel's withdrawal from all the territories it occupied in 1967. He said: This is what is happening now. Egyptian and Jordanian territories have been liberated and this will next happen to Syrian and Lebanese territories. He said that the core of the conflict and peace effort is the Palestinian cause and the Palestinian people's right to exercise its self-determination right until it establishes the Palestinian state.

Musa noted that Arab acceptance of Israel is based on the acceptance of an Arab-Israeli settlement. He said: Arab acceptance of the settlement is countered by Israeli acceptance, that is, the establishment of an Arab-Israeli peace on the basis of what was agreed on in Madrid and the conditions laid down in the UN resolutions. He stressed that the establishment of the Palestinian state is an indispensable condition. The comprehensive acceptance and all the outcomes of the settlement, including Arab-Israeli relations, are linked to this condition.

He spoke of the existence of differences over the Arab concept of accepting Israel. He said: Some countries believe that Israeli peace with a number of Arab countries, the withdrawal from Egyptian and Jordanian territories occupied in 1967, and the negotiations with Syria, the Palestinians, and then Lebanon constitute enough reason for moving toward Israel. Other countries believe that this is enough to make them regard the issue as being closed. There are different interpretations, but they do not represent new Arab fragmentation.

The foreign minister underlined the importance of all the Arab countries' continued support for the Palestinian cause and the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, retrieval of their territories, and establishment of their state, entity, and society on these territories. He said that this is a fundamental commitment that no Arab country should renege on. He expressed his belief that Israel does not regard Arab help to establish the Palestinian state and support for the Palestinian society as a hostile action. He underlined President Mubarak's acceptance of the axiom that comprehensive peace is one that includes Palestinian-Israeli peace. He added that the Palestinian elections were a very important step along this road.

Musa emphasized that all Arab countries must discuss the issues raised regarding new regional arrangements to agree on the minimum that can be done to preserve Arab identity and bolster peace. Noting that the Arab identity is not against peace, he said that preserving this identity is one of the main factors for consolidating stability in the region while living in peace with Israel. He pointed out that reports that a certain system will be imposed to replace the Arab League is an Arab responsibility. He stressed that Egypt will never accept any infringement on the Arab League because it is the Arab home and the organization that preserves the Arab identity. He said that the Arab League is not hostile to any party.

Musa asserted that Egypt did not receive any offer regarding regional activities that are broader than the Arab League can handle, although we can now see the early signs of such activities. However, we will have our own view and say regarding any regional activity. He said that previous experience shows when the Arabs adopted a unified stance on what they can accept or reject, they can fulfill their will. With peace, he said, whatever the Arabs say will be reckoned with and no system can be established against Arab wishes.

Mahmud 'Abbas, alias, Abu-Mazin, supported all that has been said about the cause of the Arab-Israeli conflict and regional plans. He praised Egypt's sponsoring of the "clean peace" principle, which provides for elimination of nuclear, biological, and weapons of mass destruction. He called on the Arabs to consider these points as a condition for a comprehensive peace. He broached the issue of the failure to date of the Arab common market. He ruled out the possibility that coexistence with Israel would lead to eliminating the Arab identity, culture, civilization, customs, and traditions. He called on intellectuals and laymen not to be afraid of peace.

Musa said that the Arabs were subject to many attempts to control, dominate, interfere, and eliminate the Arab culture and identity, but no one ever succeeded. Musa said that no one should be afraid of peace. We must be prepared to preserve the Arab identity and achieve economic and technological progress with the help of minds, cadres, experience, and wealth. He stressed that the economic dimension has a place in the new regional arrangements. He said that after establishing a Palestinian state, it will become the 23rd Arab state. He noted that the Arab economy has factors for growth. He said that in Egypt, we are working to expedite economic reforms so that the Egyptian economy may become the real base for development of the Middle East economy, in addition to the powerful Western economy. He said that by the end of this decade, the Egyptian and Arab economies will manage to confront all challenges provided that seriousness, action, and development are observed. He said in the past, the Arab economies went through positive developments as apparent in the establishment of funds that support the Arab economy, Arab cooperation, exchange of manpower, and other economic, social, and educational aspects. He noted that there were some negative aspects such as weak inter-Arab trade and failure to raise Arab investment to the required level. He said that the present is the best time to make up for time lost, particularly to create conditions favorable for moving and investing Arab capital funds. He expected the Egyptian and Arab economic reforms to stimulate and attract Arab and foreign funds to Egypt, the largest market, and to other Arab countries who will play a new role in economic growth.

Egypt's Musa Rejects 'Exaggerated Optimism' on Syria-Israel Talks

NC2901154896 Cairo MENA in Arabic
1455 GMT 29 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 29 Jan (MENA)—Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa has said that there is no reason for exaggerated optimism about progress on Syrian-Israeli negotiations. He said the peace process does not need a push — because it generates its own momentum — but it does need coordination.

In press statements today, Musa added: However, there is considerable optimism about the peace process in its entirety and in its separate elements, such as normalization. He pointed out that important and serious issues related to land and borders remain to be resolved during upcoming contacts.

Musa went on: Undoubtedly, the Lebanese-Israeli peace process track needs to be activated, especially since there is no issue between the Israelis and the Lebanese. Even when the Likud Party was in power, he noted, Israel stressed that it had no territorial claim in Lebanon.

Egyptian Prime Minister Delivers Government Policy Statement

NC2701153696 Cairo Arab Republic of Egypt Radio Network in Arabic 1030 GMT 27 Jan 96

[Government policy statement by Prime Minister Kamal al-Janzuri to the People's Assembly in Cairo—live]

[FBIS Translated Text] In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate. Mr. Speaker, esteemed brother and sister members of the People's Assembly. God's peace and blessings be upon you. As we start our joint steps today, I would like to salute Egypt, our blessed and virtuous country, and the great, generous, hospitable and patient people of Egypt, who had the honor of embracing God's prophets and messengers. I extend the same greetings to President Muhammad Husni Mubarak [applause], the righteous son of Egypt, who knows its worth and who works hard for its interests and might. I extend greetings to all of you, and I pray that you succeed in serving this honest country.

I came here today with great hopes that we will join our forces to cross over with our country onto the shores of the 21st century. The government is extending a hand to you, the representatives of the people, and to all party members, urging cooperation so that we can overcome every obstacle, face every crisis, and be able — God willing — to achieve our hoped-for objective of a bright, glorious future.

At the start of this statement, allow me please to address some messages from this esteemed forum:

The first message is to Egyptians everywhere: I tell him that the government holds him deep in its conscience and always keeps his interests in mind. The government knows that the Egyptian is the author of development and that he is its objective and goal. The government, therefore, is primarily interested in raising his standard of living and working as hard as it can to alleviate his burdens.

The second message is to politicians and party members: All members of the government, the majority, and the opposition are national forces responsible for the success of the democratic process. The government realizes that the growth and progress of democracy is linked to the presence of a national opposition that shares the responsibility of preserving the homeland's higher interests despite its different interpretations of things [applause]. Egypt is the homeland of us all; its development and progress require constructive dialogue among all national and democratic forces.

The third message is to intellectuals, journalists, and scientists: We are all entrusted to formulate a long-term future vision for Egypt in the 21st century, a vision that accommodates the changes of the age, scientific developments, and technological achievements. It is a vision that deals with the sharp, violent transformations that are about to shake old convictions and produce new values, where good might be mixed with bad, and benefit may entail some harm. Therefore, we are all responsible for preparing our country for the requirements of the coming century. For this, we need to accommodate the most advanced technology and scientific achievements and to benefit from the most creative production of international thought and arts and from all the values of virtue acceptable to religion and faith.

In all this, the media and journalists play an important role that will enjoy the government's support. We believe in freedom of the press and media. We think they will be able to entrench the values of democracy and the principles of the upcoming stage and create a spirit of participation in decisionmaking to help us achieve our hoped-for development.

The fourth message is to investors: We realize that investors help our economy flourish and our production increase. It is our duty, therefore, to respond to these investment initiatives by providing the needed facilities and creating the right climate for every Egyptian, Arab, and non-Arab investor to offer his expertise, capital, and projects. We will spare no effort in removing obstacles in the way of investors, in securing capital for them, and in safeguarding their rights so that we and they can achieve the desired boom in Egypt's economy and the profits and gains they deserve.

The fifth message is to our Arab brothers: Arab cooperation in all areas and common Arab interests constitute a genuine part of the thinking of Egypt's political leadership. This is a basic trend in government policy we always try to achieve. Our sincere efforts to strengthen our relations with regional and international groups are not an alternative to Arab economic cooperation programs, and we will always seek to find the best formulas for reviving and vitalizing these programs. If Egypt's fate and civilized role made it a leader, it wants only to perform its duty toward its nation and to contribute as much as possible to building the edifice of the nation's civilization and culture.

The sixth message is to the world: Through its Arab, African, Islamic, and international role, Egypt has been an advocate of peace and stability. By virtue of its nature, history, and civilization, Egypt hates injustice and aggression. Egypt will continue to pursue this policy until a just and comprehensive peace involving all sides is achieved in our region. And we will always remain committed to all our international agreements and conventions.

It remains for me to send dutiful greetings of pride and appreciation, from this People's Assembly forum, to the men of the Armed Forces [applause]. Greetings to the shield of the homeland and the fortress of its national security and stability, to our valiant Armed Forces, who are working hard for the glory and might of Egypt and the protection of its national soil at all times. Greetings to all the soldiers of Egypt.

Greetings to policemen [applause], who work hard day and night to safeguard our society's security and safety. They meet evil with a decisive response and corruption with the appropriate deterrence so that every citizen can feel safe about his present and future. I extend heartfelt greetings to all policemen in all their positions.

Greetings to the men of law [applause], who are upholding justice, protecting rights and freedoms, and making legislation the society's tool to achieve its development and progress. Greetings to the men of law, the beacons of justice and protectors of the rule of law.

Mr. Speaker, dear members: In offering statements on government policies and plans, we are always used to elaborating on past achievements and future objectives, presenting many figures about production, investment, consumption, labor, exports, imports, revenues, income, and spending. But allow me this time to depart from this method and to present to you the inclinations, policies, and objectives we seek to achieve. I will present them to you briefly, and we will meet after some time to give an account of what the government, through the forces of the great people of Egypt, has achieved.

These inclinations and policies, brothers, are mainly based on the contents of the president's letter of designation to the new government and on his comprehensive speech to the People's Assembly and the Consultative Council on 16 December. These inclinations constitute the real challenge to the Egyptian people. World blocs, brothers and sisters, are being formed faster than you think, and they are working together and growing in size and capability. The formidable technological progress in the world makes it necessary for us to demonstrate solidarity — to differ but to demonstrate solidarity — for the sake of Egypt.

The first such challenge is the issue of development, or production. It is imperative for the Egyptian economic growth rate to increase by a ratio three times greater than that of the population increase starting next year. Secondly, the economic development process must be wide enough to absorb new workers and reduce the existing unemployment. We must create no fewer than 500,000 jobs [annually].

The third challenge is to broaden the base of social solidarity, or social security. The fourth challenge is to improve the standard of living for Egyptian citizens, and the fifth challenge is to bridge the gaps in development among the various governorates.

The sixth challenge requires an effective and comprehensive confrontation of the population issue, whether with regard to population growth or relocation.

We should say as a government that no new burdens are being imposed on Egyptian citizens. But while committing the government to this obligation, we are at the same time committing it to its obligation of maintaining the budget balance. Hence, we should keep a lid on all forms of expenditures and maintain the rate of exchange, because these are required for promoting and expanding development.

How do we face these challenges?

This is the philosophy behind the recent government change. We are in a race with time. Looking at what is going on around us, we came to the conclusion that we must keep our experts. Problems have reached such an extent that the ordinary citizen has become aware of them. We want these experts to sit in working teams that will draw up solutions, after which we can come to the cabinet for decisions to solve these problems. Any decisions issued must be implemented and followed up.

The government has already taken some decisions since it started its work. Among these decisions were the following:

1. There is before you a draft law for providing desert land for free or at a nominal price in order to expand the scope for investment. [applause]

2. There is a draft law on the relationship between landlords and tenants in empty housing units. The objective is to encourage investments in real estate.

3. Tariffs on capital goods will be reduced by 10 percent in order to encourage investments.

4. All the funds we have obtained from Egyptian workers abroad will be refunded.

5. The cost of electricity for agricultural activities in desert lands will be reduced. This will then be extended to reclaimed lands. But cooperatives and individuals have first to complete the reclamation projects, after which the state will embark on building this infrastructure so that this land will become green. They will pay the costs over 20 years.

Another thing is that there will be no additional tariffs without a law. [applause] Any new tariff imposed after the 17 January cabinet session will be repaid and those who imposed these tariffs will be questioned. [applause]

These are some of the decisions and we will, God willing, issue other decisions at the future cabinet sessions which will tackle the problems.

But allow me to speak about the economic sectors and how they could face the challenges I mentioned at the beginning, that is, the challenges of increasing production, labor, social equality, and raising the standard of living.

Some sectors are called the productive and productive services sectors. There are 10 such sectors. There are also eight social development services. I will tell you briefly what we want to do with these sectors.

1. The agricultural sector. By its own nature and indispensability, this should be at the forefront of the development process. We need a great breakthrough in this sector. It must achieve real growth of between 3.5 and 4 percent so as to achieve a year by year self-sufficiency in major commodities and so as to increase agricultural exports. Hence, we have to deal with vertical and horizontal expansion. To achieve vertical expansion, the production of agricultural crops must increase. How could we achieve this if the state does not support the Egyptian farmer? [applause]

The Egyptian farmer and the investor are free to make their own decisions. But the state cannot give up the role it should play to support the efforts the farmers and the investors are making in other fields.

The farmer needs easy finance and enough resources to get fertilizers, pesticides, and seeds that are enriched every year with new hybrids. He also needs more fertile soil, completed irrigation systems, better marketing facilities, and ways to limit the rate of waste. This vertical expansion, which represents the farmer's efforts, needs state support.

In addition to this, there is animal wealth, poultry, and fisheries. All these sectors are interrelated. They succeed whenever this vertical expansion does. Horizontal expansion is an important factor, but it is costly for those who invest in the desert. We have to encourage and give incentives to such investors. Therefore, at the last People's Assembly session, a decision was made disallowing elimination of already farmed lands which were leased or bought from the Ministry of Agriculture. These lands must stay green for the sake of those who invested in them, no matter how heated the dispute might be among other government agencies.

When we talk about horizontal expansion, we cannot stop at the targeted 1.6 million feddans, which will be irrigated by the recently completed canals or those to be completed shortly, like the first and second phases of al-Salam Canal, the canal east of the Suez Canal, al-Salihiyah and its tributaries, al-Bustan, or al-Nasr. We have to go out of the old valley. We are using underground water in the al-Wadi al-Jadid and we are considering a project to dig a canal from the Isna Canal that extends 220 km inside al-Wadi al-Jadid. These are the challenges facing the agricultural sector.

Moving on into the industrial sector: The industrial base has been renovated and updated. Still, this sector faced some problems during the past five years, because it was affected by fiscal reform and by the change in its administration and systems. But progress in this sector must go hand in hand with progress in the agricultural sector, if not before it. Progress in this sector can only be ahead of agriculture if there is a strong, productive agriculture. We expect this sector to achieve an annual real growth rate of 10 percent at least. How?

First of all, the idle energies, some 20-25 percent, must be employed. We need to prepare them technically and financially and improve their marketability. We have to upgrade quality and cost and comply with world specifications so that the Egyptian product can compete with the international. We have to increase our intermediate and capital production so that we can consolidate the local manufacture. We also have to encourage small and medium industries to absorb manpower and to increase the volume of trade by increasing imports. There is no fear from increased imports so long as they are used for the purpose of manufacture and export.

The electricity sector witnessed a considerable accomplishment. We now have 82.5 [billion] kw/hour of electric energy. In spite of this and the existing reserves, we have to make more efforts to increase the volume of electric energy to 105 billion kw/hour by the end of the next five-year plan, and meet the demand created by expansions in the framework of development in both production and consumption, particularly after the linkage between the east and west and that between Arab, African, and European states. For the first time, Egypt will see how electricity can be produced for export.

The petroleum sector has witnessed major accomplishments. Suffice it to mention that reserves in oil and natural gas today are one and a half times more than what they were in 1981-1982, despite production, exports, and consumption. We will endeavor and encourage foreign companies to conduct further exploration to increase the reserves. Despite the increase in reserves, we will preserve Egypt's national oil reserves. We produce not more than 45 million tons annually and intend to maintain the level of refining 30 million tons annually. But we will increase our production and consumption of natural gas from 9 million to 16 million tons.

The construction sector has played a major role in building the infrastructure and all the productive and service installations. However, it needs to modernize its equipment and administration in order to meet upcoming challenges to broaden the road of development and to expand overseas to participate in construction work in the Arab and African regions.

The transport and communications sector has witnessed major accomplishments in all its fields. The railway has been modernized and rail lines have been built. New roads have been paved, new bridges and tunnels have been built, and the maritime transportation fleet has been consolidated. In addition, the air fleet has been strengthened, the Suez Canal modernized and deepened, and the telephone system improved. Despite this major accomplishment in all areas, this sector, along with the other infrastructure sectors such as electricity and public utilities, has pumped new blood into the Egyptian economy, and we must continue this trend. In this sector in the coming year, work on the road between Asyut and Aswan will be completed. The road from Safajah, Qina, al-Wadi al-Jadid, up to the Abu Tartur mines will be completed. The highway running along the west bank of the Nile between Cairo and Asyut will be completed. The first part of the second phase of the Cairo underground metro between Shubra al-Khaymah up to Semiramis or Ramsis Square will be completed. God willing, 12 months thereafter we will extend the metro service to al-Tahrir Square. We intend to add approximately 540,000 telephone lines to have a total of approximately 4 million telephone lines. In 1981, we had only 540,000 lines.

In the trade sector, we must increase our volume of trade, not only through reliance on the material available locally, but also through imports, manufacturing, and exports. This may require new channels of marketing, dynamic activity through the Trade Representation Agency, and encouragement of the private sector to proceed in that direction. The internal trade needs backing and organization. Through internal trade, we can provide commodities for the people at reasonable prices. In the past few days, the consumer cooperatives were brought under the supervision of the Ministry of Trade and Supply, which must firmly confront any activity related to commercial fraud, dumping, and monopoly.

The banking system has to develop, even though it is much better now than it was some years ago, so that it can meet the challenge of competition in the area.

Brothers and sisters, as regards the money market, Egypt has a great opportunity to be a market for the Arab region in the near future.

Concerning tourism, this promising sector, in the past years managed to reach the target of 3 million tourists and about 20 million tourist nights. In the coming years and until the end of the fourth 5-year development plan, we must ensure that the number of tourists and tourist nights is doubled. But this requires a flexible investment policy in tourism and support for promotion. Tourism is no longer a source for foreign currency competing with oil or the Suez Canal revenues, but tops the sectors that employ workers.

As regards the housing sector, we managed, thanks to Egypt's efforts, to build 2.2 million housing units after establishing about 720 million units in 20 years from 1960-79. However the problem is somewhat persistent and we hope that the new draft law, if it is ratified by your esteemed assembly, will help solve this problem by investing in real estate. The state's role in low-cost housing remains. The low-cost housing needs a push; that is to say that all incomplete units have to be finished before we begin building new units. This means that we have to provide all the necessary infrastructure to these buildings so that they can be occupied. Also financial burdens on the eligible people must be reconsidered, whether in terms of the installment periods or amounts.

The final sector of the production and production services sectors is that of the public utilities, drinking water, and sewage. Brothers and sisters, more than 25 billion pounds has been spent on this sector over the past years. God willing, pure water will be provided for all village by June 1997.

As for the sewage system, we still need years to provide this service to all major cities and villages. However, we need a survey and this is being conducted by a parliamentary group, a ministerial group is studying the incomplete stations so that they could be given priority and completed. Drinking-water plants that are not operating as desired—their requirements, maintenance, and needs—should be reviewed. Then they should be looked after and their cadres trained. This is a briefing on the production and production services sectors.

As for the social services sectors, we need continuous support for all aspects of the educational process because education is the core of life and knowledge. We should provide all its requirements in terms of infrastructure, equipment, computers, technical advancement, and missions abroad. This is one of the issues we are seeking to settle through one of the ministerial groups. Also there is need for a comprehensive handling of the abolition of illiteracy in a set time as part of the education sector.

The other sector is health. We need to back this sector and run it more rationally so that the Egyptian citizen can at least enjoy adequate medical services as we approach the 21st century. Hospitals and their equipment must be completed and their requirements must be met by trained doctors and nurses. There must be decisive administration to ensure that the offered medical service is worth the money spent on.

As regards the third sector: culture. It has to be supported so that everyone may enjoy a great deal of cultural nourishment. To do that, we have to make books affordable by the public's majority available to everyone. Tourism activity must be boosted so that tourism will regain its previous leading role in the Arab region. Theater and music should be backed and antiquities must be protected and refurbished regardless of cost because they represent a global heritage with which Egypt was endowed and must preserve. [momentary break in reception]

Next year we will enhance the palaces of culture with six new palaces and the houses of culture with 10 new houses.

The media sector: We must support media production by all means to ensure that we have a product bearing the Egyptian Arab identity and confronting [the influence] of the direct channels we receive through satellites. We must also support and complete audio and visual media. This dictates that we boost the Egyptian Space Channel to enable it to reach the Arab world, Europe, North America, and later South America, God willing. We must also have specialized channels and proceed with our plans to launch the Nilesat.

Religious care: We need to complete building and renovating mosques and increase the ownership of the Awqaf [endowment]. The Awqaf Ministry is today supervising 25,000 mosques, and we will increase these by another 5 thousand next year. We must promote religious preaching and enable mosques to offer integrated services. We must make the necessary appropriations for al-Azhar to complete and build new institutions.

We must look into ways to look after families economically and socially; we must expand the umbrella of insurances and start applying Mubarak's plan for social solidarity, which, in essence, offers integrated services for low-income people.

The other sector is that of youths and sports. We are planning to complete youth centers. There are 4,000 youth centers in Egypt today, but they need equipment and personnel. We will complete these facilities, and we will add 120 new centers next year, God willing. Four years ago we started what is called the open club, or the open playground. We so far have 450 of them, and we seek to add 100 new ones next year. Brothers and sisters, we must encourage sports in schools and universities. We must promote sports by supporting sport clubs and facilitating their coordination with the sport unions, the Olympic Committee, and the Higher Council for Youths and Sports so that Egypt's name will again be heard in Olympic and international championships.

Justice is another sector. We must facilitate the procedures for referring cases to court and provide the courts the necessary buildings, modern scientific equipment, and microfilm service. This service is now available in all courts of first instance and courts of appeal. There remain 230 courts of summary jurisdiction which will be equipped with this service next year.

Brothers and sisters, this is a summary of the production and productive services sector and another summary of the social services sector and of the policies for facing the challenges I mentioned earlier.

Then comes one thing which I will not call a sector but the defender of Egypt's soil and security. It is the Armed Forces. We must offer the Armed Forces complete support and all the funds it needs. We lived in a state of war for many years. Today we are seeking peace. The situation still requires strong forces that are aware of everything happening around us. We support the Armed Forces. We will preserve peace, which is more difficult than confrontation. The Armed Forces must get all their requirements met. The police too must get all they require, so as to confront anyone who violates the law and to achieve social and economic peace and also the stability through which peaceful development is achieved.

Brothers and sisters, there are in addition to all the above — production, services, the Armed Forces' protection, and the police help in maintaining domestic stability — national projects that go hand in hand with all the sectors. Foremost of them is the national project to develop Sinai and the national project to develop southern Egypt. Work is already underway to implement the national project to develop northern Upper Egypt. Then there are the national projects for comprehensive rural development and the project to remove the slums.

Without going into detail, all these projects are seeking to take the country into a new phase, to provide new opportunities for development in all the sectors, and to raise personal standards of living.

Brothers and sisters, this is a summary of the statement which I preferred to present to you as a preliminary one. The challenges are great and we call on all the parties and groups to participate so that we can all work together for the sake of Egypt. I pray to God to guide us to the straight path and help us in shouldering the responsibility. For He is the best guide and best supporter. God's peace and mercy be with you. [applause]

Muslim Brotherhood Appeals Court Seizure of Lawyers Union

NC2901150996 Paris AFP in English 1437 GMT 29 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Cairo, Jan 29 (AFP) — The Moslem Brotherhood-dominated lawyers' union appealed on Monday [29 January] a decision by the courts to take control of the union, legal sources said.

The union lodged an appeal to suspend execution of the ruling issued by Cairo's emergency matters court on Sunday, the sources said. The appeal automatically suspends the ruling temporarily until the appeals court, which will begin hearing the case on February 29, decides whether or not to make the suspension permanent. Union lawyers are also preparing an appeal to reverse the decision itself, the sources said.

The emergency matters court ordered the union put under judicial custodianship due to financial violations committed by the Moslem Brotherhood members running the syndicate. The decision came as a blow to the banned fundamentalist group, which has used the lawyers' union and other influential syndicates as a legal base for their political activity. The engineering union, which the Brotherhood also controls, has been under judicial control since last summer.

Egyptian News Analysis Expects MB To Go Underground

NC2901221796 Cairo AL-MUSAWWAR in Arabic 26 Jan 96 p 10

[Report by Hamdi Rizq]

[FBIS Translated Text] The Muslim Brothers [MB] resolved the issue of Abu-al-Nasr's successor at his burial ceremony. They pledged allegiance to Mustafa Mashhur as new general guide of the banned group. They now have two matters to settle, the first is who will be first deputy guide and the second is how to fill the vacancies in the Guidance Bureau. The bureau lost three of its most senior members in the past five years, starting with Husni 'Abd-al-Baqi, followed by Ahmad al-Malat, and recently Hamid Abu-al-Nasr, who died at 83 years of age.

In the first matter, I have learned that the MB intends to promote Counselor Muhammad Ma'mun al-Hudaybi from second to first deputy guide, keeping his title as official MB spokesman, the post al-Hudaybi is careful to maintain in view of his attachment to the media and his love for talking to foreign news agencies.

The second position seems to be the "most intricate problem" facing the MB, particularly since the "old guard" in the guidance bureau—including 'Abbas al-Sisi, Muhammad Mahdi 'Akif, and Ahmad Hasanayn—are refraining from accepting any position. The latter voluntarily gave up the position of general guide to Mashhur. This means that the prominent position will have to go to one of the young men of the second generation. But the new generation has not made up its mind about who among them will be leader. Moreover, their cards were confused after the prison sentences issued against some of their prominent figures, like Dr. Muhammad Habib, Dr. 'Isam al-'Uryan, and 'Abd-al-Mun'im Abu-al-Futuh. They are called "the prison team" and are demanding their share of the leadership as a reward for undergoing arrest and imprisonment. They want something to raise their morale and reflect the care the group accords them, particularly since their imprisonment wasted their opportunity to join the parliament.

Moreover, the second group of the new generation who are outside jail and who operate through trade unions—particularly the Lawyers Association, the Engineers Syndicate, and the Engineers Association—are eager to promote one of them to that position, even at the expense of the "prison team." This will naturally create a climate of conflict the group cannot afford at present.

Despite al-Hudaybi's sweet talk about what is happening within the group, particularly the fate of the Guidance Bureau, the three vacant positions are expected to trigger a new race, not less fierce than the one that raged over the general guide's position. The race will involve the "prison team" and the trade unions team. The latter started to arrange its cards early on. It is putting pressure on the group in its weakest phases through the new party that bears the name "The Center Party."

There is an impression that Mashhur's ascent to the top of the group will drag it into a phase of violence, taking it, as usual, to underground activity. Mashhur is known for his sharp temper and rejection of compromises. These characteristics, added to the fracture the group has experienced since the arrest of the members of the Shura organization, will turn the MB into a group living off of secret work. The group will thus divorce public action forever. Should this happen, the group will find in Mashhur, the Amir of the global organization of the MB and the leader of the special organization, a suitable leader at this stage, since he is an expert on the affairs of underground organizations.

Libya

Libyan Radio Calls Omani-Israeli Trade Agreement 'Disaster' for Arabs

LD2801150096 Tripoli Great Jamahiriyah Radio Network in Arabic 1330 GMT 28 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Oman and the Israeli enemy yesterday signed a trade agreement between them. AFP said that the agreement was signed in Muscat during a visit paid by terrorist Yakub Biran, the assistant to the general manager of the Israeli enemy Foreign Ministry. Terrorist Biran underlined that the agreement was important to the Israeli enemy.

Oman's signing of this agreement comes within the appalling concessions made by some Arabs on the way of surrender to the enemy of the Arab nation, which is openly declaring its aggressive intentions against the Arab nation through the repeated statements made by the Israeli terrorists who thereby show their aggressive and warlike intentions.

Likewise, the signing of this agreement with the enemy by Oman — which is the first Gulf state that undertakes such a surrender — comes as yet another disaster to beset the Arab nation, through which the enemy will be able to make yet another gain at the expense of the Arab nation. It will also offer it yet another foothold to infiltrate the Arab homeland so as to carry out its aggressive designs aimed at bringing under control our potentials and usurping our resources.

Tunisia

Al-Nahdah Denounces Tunisian Normalization With Israel

MM2901135796 London AL-HAYAH in Arabic 29 Jan 96 p 4

[Unattributed report: "Al-Nahdah Denounces Tunisian Normalization With Israel"]

[FBIS Translated Text] London, AL-HAYAH — The Tunisian Islamic al-Nahdah movement has expressed its extreme alarm at the Tunisian Government's decision to exchange interests offices with Israel, "after scores of delegations held secret and public meetings and dealt with Israel in various spheres."

Rached Ghannouchi, the movement's leader, pointed out in a statement, of which AL-HAYAH obtained a copy yesterday, that this decision "is another step in the rush [toward Israel] policy, which has no respect for Arab solidarity and is weakening the position of fraternal Lebanon and Syria and the Palestinian position as well, especially in the final phase of the negotiations over the major problems — Jerusalem, the refugees, and sovereignty over the land. It is also liable to lead to the intensification of the blockade imposed on sisterly Syria and to embarrass it."

He said that "the most serious threat facing our nation now is the region's reliance on the Zionist project seeking to destroy the components of the Arab and Islamic nation and to break up its institutions, such as the Arab Maghreb Union, which are weak already, for the sake of building a Middle East order on the debris of the Arab homeland and the Arab League."

He said that the Tunisian decision is further evidence of the regime's autocratic decisionmaking concerning the country's higher policies, since it defies the will of the Tunisian people and their patriotic elite with their various ideological and political inclinations.

Oman

Omani Official Says Agreement With Israel To Boost Trade

NC2801114296 Paris AFP in English 1109 GMT 28 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Muscat, Jan 28 (AFP) — The agreement between the Gulf Arab state of Oman and Israel will pave the way for business, trade and investment between the two nations, an Omani official said Sunday [28 January].

"The decision of the two countries will contribute to better contacts between private companies in Oman and Israel and encourage cooperation in the areas of investment and trade," said the official who asked not to be named.

Oman and Israel signed an agreement here Saturday to open trade offices in each other's country, and will later appoint delegates to these missions, an official said.

An Omani Foreign Ministry statement published here Sunday said "the move of both countries is part of the Middle East peace process to establish a fair and durable peace in this region."

The agreement was signed during a visit here by an Israeli Foreign Ministry delegation led by Yo'av Biran on Saturday, the ministry said.

"This announcement is important for Israel because it is the first time that a Gulf country has official relations with us," Foreign Ministry spokesman Yigal Palmor told AFP in Jerusalem.

Oman and Qatar are the only Gulf Arab countries to envisage normalization with Israel.

Oman began a rapprochement with the Jewish state in December 1994 when it received Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhaq Rabin, who was assassinated in Tel Aviv about a year later by a Jewish extremist.

Official delegations from Oman and Qatar both attended Rabin's funeral.

Bahrain

Bahraini Popular Front Leader Comments on Domestic Situation

JN2601185896 Amman SHIHAN in Arabic 27 Jan-2 Feb 96 p 15

[Interview with Sa'id Sayf, secretary general of the Bahraini Popular Front, by Yusuf al-Bustanji and Jihad Abu-Baydar; place and date not given]

[[FBIS Translated Text] [SHIHAN] Mr. Sa'id Sayf, what about the confrontation between you and the government and what about the situation in Bahrain?

[Sayf] The government recently exacerbated the situation and is attempting to accuse foreign parties so that it can use this as an excuse to attack the opposition. The members of the Initiative Committee were arrested again. Shaykh 'Abd-al-Amir al-Jamri, 'Abd-al-Wahhab Husayn Hasan Khalil, Shabar al-'Alawi, Hasan anl-Dihi, and Hasan Shumay' are on this committee.

These leaders have played a basic role in the popular movements over a one-year period. While in prison last year, the members of this committee negotiated with the Interior Ministry in the person of Mr. Henderson. They reached an agreement to calm things down in exchange for releasing the detainees and suspending the trials.

[SHIHAN] Where is the problem, if you and the government have reached an agreement?

[Sayf] The government did not abide by the agreement and did not release all of the detainees. It kept more than 1,000 detainees in prison. The government officially admitted this. During the recent confrontations, the government arrested more than 2,000 in a large-scale search operation throughout the country.

[SHIHAN] What will happen? Will Bahrain see further escalation?

[Sayf] The government stepped up the arrests and escalated the confrontation. It threatens to strike any popular move. The government has prepared a plan to draw out the opposition and deal it a blow.

[SHIHAN] What is the nature of your relations with Iran, and do you receive assistance from it?

[Sayf] There is an attempt to make the people believe that Iran supports the opposition to divert attention from the real causes of the crisis. The government accuses Iran because some of the opposition members received their education in the Iranian city of Qom. The government considers everyone who studied in that city as suspects, even if they have nothing to do with the opposition.

[SHIHAN] What are your demands? What do you think are the causes of the crisis?

[Sayf] The real cause of the crisis is the refusal to restore parliament and allow the more than 500 deportees to return to the homeland, and the refusal to reactivate the constitution that has been paralyzed since 1973. The National Assembly was replaced by an appointed Shura [consultative] council that pledges allegiance to the government and has no prerogatives.

[SHIHAN] What will be your reply to the government's escalation?

[Sayf] The issue will not be settled by martial law. If the government persists in the escalation, the people will have no other choice but to defend themselves. The people have been using stones and Molotov cocktails. We do not know if the confrontation will take more violent forms in the future, God forbid.

[SHIHAN] Have people been killed or wounded in the recent confrontations?

[Sayf] We do not know if some were killed but there is a large number of wounded.

[SHIHAN] Why did you choose this time to carry out the escalation with the government?

[Sayf] We did not choose the time. The government began the escslatation and the provocation.

[SHIHAN] Why does the opposition don the cloth of religion if its demands are democratic or constitutional?

[Sayf] We are a democratic force, a broad front, a national coalition which has a democratic and not religious orientation. One of our most important demands is the restoration of parliament.

[SHIHAN] Do you receive any assistance from any foreign party?

[Sayf] There is no assistance from any foreign party. Many Gulf politicians, parliamentarians, and former ministers support us on the political level and in the media. We also enjoy popular support. However, the Gulf Cooperation Council officially supports the government.

[SHIHAN] Have you recently tried to hold a dialogue with the government?

[Sayf] The government refuses to hold a dialogue with anyone, or to receive any party. Henderson works to achieve his own interests because any accord between the government and the people will be against his interests. People like him do what they can to create a rift between the government and the people, and the big powers try to increase their military presence in the region.

The situation in Bahrain will not stabilize. This will be the main characteristic in 1996 unless the government announces general amnesty and holds elections.

Bahraini Liberation Front Leader Interviewed on Recent Incidents

JN2601193696 Amman SHIHAN in Arabic 27 Jan-2 Feb 96 p 15

[Interview with Sayf Bin-'Ali, secretary general of the Bahraini Liberation Front, by Yusuf al-Bustanji and Jihad Abu-Baydar; place and date not given]

[FBIS Translated Text] [SHIHAN] How will your front respond to the escalation by the Bahraini Government?

[Bin-'Ali] It is an unfortunate situation, but the one who began it is to blame. The authorities started this when they rejected political reform. I submitted a popular petition signed by 25,000 Bahraini citizens to the leadership and asked that it be forwarded to the amir in January 1994. However, instead of accepting the petition, the authorities began a campaign of arrests and arrested political leader Shaykh 'Ali Salman. It was this incident that led to the recent events. The government went back on the earlier agreement, denied that it even exists, announced that all gatherings and speeches are prohibited, and closed down the mosques.

[SHIHAN] How did the government deal with the popular protests?

[Bin-'Ali] The government unleashed its forces to combat riots. These forces surrounded the people, beat them with sticks, and used tear gas and other methods. The violence by the authorities resulted in counter-violence, because violence can only breed violence.

[SHIHAN] Did you recently suggest holding a dialogue with the government?

[Bin-'Ali] The government refuses to hold a dialogue. We demand that the government hold negotiations with the opposition. We are against violence, and what took place is a reaction to the violence practiced by the authorities, which was rather fierce.

[SHIHAN] Are you against the regime and the ruling family?

[Bin-'Ali] We are neither against the regime nor the ruling family. However, we demand the participation of the people, the activation of the constitution, and the return of the National Assembly and new elections. We are asking for a modern constitutional state based on the law.

[SHIHAN] Do you expect a declaration of martial law at this stage?

[Bin-'Ali] Martial laws are already in force without being officially announced, and the Bahraini Government intends to pursue a more ruthless approach than before. We are calling on the government to reconsider its stands.

[SHIHAN] Do you expect to resort to arms, and do you have camps or bases in Bahrain?

[Bin-'Ali] We have no camps or bases in Bahrain or in any other country. We prefer to reactivate the constitution, and we are working for this aim.

[SHIHAN] Do the other Gulf opposition parties interact with you?

[Bin-'Ali] All of the Gulf people interact with one another; they are one people, and they are affected by one another. The 100 Kuwaitis who signed a petition asking that our demands be answered were blacklisted in Bahrain. There are liberation movements all over the Gulf states; the Gulf is beginning to see a state of unrest!

[SHIHAN] Is there an agreement among all Bahraini opposition forces?

[Bin-'Ali] There is coordination among all influential forces inside Bahrain, and we maintain contact with them all the time.

[SHIHAN] Where do you get your financing?

[Bin-'Ali] We get it only from our people in Bahrain. Some Arab regimes used to help us in the past, but now there is no aid from any foreign party.

Bahraini Islamic Front Leader Interviewed on Nation's 'Crisis'

JN2601211096 Paris Radio Monte Carlo in Arabic 1630 GMT 26 Jan 96

[Telephone interview with Shaykh 'Ali Salaman, secretary general of the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain, in London, by Salim Badawi at the Radio Monte Carlo Studio; date not given; from the "Week's Event" program — recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Badawi] Shaykh 'Ali Salaman, secretary general of the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain, who has been a refugee in London for almost a year, said in an exclusive interview with the "Week's Event" program, that accusing external quarters is an old trend followed by the authority in Manama.

[Salman] This trend is not new. At the beginning of the events the press and some officials spoke about foreign intervention. This charge has been repeated for more than a year without any clear evidence. There are not any contacts by the movement with any foreign countries. It is a movement that arises from the people's urgent and necessary needs. I there were foreign interference, it would have been revealed over the past year and it would have become clear that there has been no foreign support.

[Badawi] What are the reasons for this crisis and these disturbances?

[Salman] They are because of the absence of citizen participation in political decisions. Citizens are completely deprived of participation in political decisions. There are no constitutional councils or establishments to express the citizens' opinions. This led to corruption in the state organs and the inability to stop or correct this corruption. Therefore, a movement has been formed that benefits from the international atmosphere, especially after the Gulf war, which resulted in the restoration of the Kuwaiti constitution and parliament. This was similar to the demands in Bahrain.

[Badawi] Will sabotage and violent operations lead to the desired political change?

[Salman] The movement began peacefully and continues to be peaceful. In 1992, with the beginning of this movement, a memorandum was presented to the amir and was signed by 300 important scholars. In 1994 there was a popular memorandum that was also peaceful. The activities continued to be peaceful for more than a year. What has been reported these days, the exaggeration of some incidents, and the attempt to portray the movement as violent is government propaganda to uproot the peaceful demands in the street.

[Badawi] Within the same framework, why is the Bahraini opposition stigmatized as a sectarian opposition—the Shiite opposition in particular?

[Salman] It is also an attempt to isolate the movement and cut it down to size within one sect in order to wipe it out by force. The general patriotic nature will be more disturbing to the regime. Therefore, it tries to hide this nature and to show that it is a movement with a sectarian religious nature and thus has nothing to do with the declared constitutional demands.

[Badawi] What is the Islamic Front's responsibility? The Islamic Front's discourse and the statements previously made by its leaders gave a sectarian and Shiite nature to the overall opposition in Bahrain.

[Salman] The Islamic Front is part of the general Islamic movement, and it has a certain asset in the street. However, the movement's substance is characterized by the presence of ulema who were arrested recently. There are also non-Islamic movements that have issued statements, and there are moderate Islamic movements. Moderation is the general nature of the existing movement in the country.

[Badawi] What is your comment on the U.S. position expressed by Robert Pelletreau, who first accused Iran of encouraging the disturbances in Bahrain? At the same time, Pelletreau said that the high level of unemployment in Bahrain is one of the reasons for these disturbances.

[Salman] Iran has no interest in the current events in the country. For some time now Iran has pursued a policy of appeasement toward the Gulf states in an attempt to build bridges with them, basically to improve its economic situation because there is a profitable market for Iran in the Gulf states.

Moreover, Iran has no interest in confusing the situation because, from the Iranian viewpoint, doing so will justify the presence of foreign forces in the Gulf region. Iran does not want this presence.

As far as I know, Iran has not stood behind movements demanding the return of the constitution or other demands. The accusations leveled against Iran do not have any proof. Moreover, the nature of opposition, which includes leftists, secularists, Sunnis, and Shiites, weakens these accusations.

Naturally, unemployment and the economic situation are part of the events in the country. The impact of the economic situation, particularly unemployment, on these events cannot be denied. However, the economic factor, particularly unemployment, is not the basic factor in these events.

The basic factor in these events is the absence of the opinion of the citizens living in Bahrain with regard to the political decisions which concern their daily life.

[Badawi] Robert Pelletreau also said that the Bahraini Government's way of dealing with the developments merits Washington's support. This U.S. support is to be added to the outside support which was expressed to the Bahraini authorities, particularly by the Gulf Cooperation Council states and most Arab states. How do you view the ultimate way out of this crisis in view of these positions which support the central authorities in Manama?

[Salman] We are claiming a clear right. Despite the fact that the temporary circumstances, as a result of some media and political campaigns, are not opportune, I believe that our insistence on our rights by peaceful means could change this temporary equation.

Under some circumstances and historic moments, outside support for the other party can be strong. However, we cannot relinquish our rights under the current type of pressures.

Bahraini Officials Deny Political Prisoners 'Being Force-fed'

NC2701160696 Paris AFP in English
1525 GMT 27 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Manama, Jan 27 (AFP) — Bahraini officials said on Saturday [27 January] that jailed opposition leaders were being well treated and denied they were being force-fed to break their hunger strike.

A Bahraini official, who requested anonymity, also said the prisoners were receiving medical treatment and could have family visits twice a week.

The Bahrain Freedom Movement, an exiled opposition group, sent a statement to AFP in Nicosia charging that two Bahraini Shiite leaders, 'Abd-al-Wahhab Husayn and Hasan Mushayhimah, were being force-fed at a military hospital in Bahrain since Friday after going on hunger strike.

According to Saturday's statement, the main Shiite opposition leader, Shaykh 'Abd-al-Amir al-Jamri, was also hospitalized because of his deteriorating health.

The three opposition leaders also went on hunger strike in October.

Violence first erupted in December 1994 after the arrest of a Shiite cleric who had called for the restoration of parliament suspended in 1975. Sporadic unrest lasted until April and left 13 dead.

Bahraini authorities on Monday arrested eight Shiite Moslem leaders described as the ringleaders behind a wave of political unrest in the Gulf archipelago, the interior ministry said.

The announcement came after several weeks of violence in Shiite Moslem areas of Bahrain, including arson attacks, explosions, stone-throwing and attacks on security services.

Manama has said that 174 people were arrested in recent political violence which flared again after several months of calm in the Gulf archipelago, but lawyers said there had been 2,000 arrests in past weeks.

Bahraini Newspaper Criticizes 'Tendentious' Media Campaign

JN2801160296 Manama WAKH in Arabic
1400 GMT 28 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Manama, 28 Jan (WAKH)—The Bahraini AL-AYYAM newspaper published today, criticizes the tendentious media campaigns by some parties and organizations, including the so-called Hizballah in

Lebanon, as well as some foreign news agencies and radio stations which cite suspicious sources to make lies and slanders against Bahrain.

In its editorial, the paper says: These campaigns will not achieve their objectives for the simple reason that Bahrain—leadership and people—has nothing to hide, for everyone is aware of what is going on in this country.

It clarifies: It is not strange for the so-called Lebanese Hizballah to adopt such a stand toward developments in Bahrain. Its attempts to exonerate those who were involved in the incidents are exposed, particularly after this large-scale Arab and international denunciation of the attempts to interfere in Bahrain's internal affairs.

AL-AYYAM says: By citing suspicious sources, the credibility of some foreign news media and radio stations has been put to the test after many slanders and lies have been refuted on the ground, and after it has become clear that the news reports they have carried were basically baseless.

AL-AYYAM adds: Bahrain does not place obstacles to the dissemination of true, real information. We would like to reassure these parties and organs that the citizen feels by himself the security situation and is fully aware of what is going on. If some parties are trying to make media or material gains they, in fact, are addressing the wrong people because they cannot achieve their known and exposed objectives through Bahrain.

AL-AYYAM says: The fact cannot be hidden and Bahrain is an open country for all. Bahrain's media policy aims at informing its citizens of what is going on in their country, at placing them before their historic responsibilities toward their homeland, people, and society, and at exposing the black hands which seek to obstruct its development march toward building a modern state.

The Bahraini paper notes that this balanced media policy has strengthened the citizen's confidence in their government's ability to overcome these incidents and spread security and safety. The people have become confident that what is happening today is no more than a transient matter and that Bahrain's position will not be encroached on at all.

Concluding its commentary, AL-AYYAM stresses that Bahrain will never allow any deceptive group to burn or undermine the homeland's gains or threaten the citizens' interests. Bahrain will also allow nobody to obstruct its march or prevent it from achieving progress and development.

Severance of Bahrain's Relations With Iran 'Ruled Out'

MM2901130996 London AL-HAYAH in Arabic 29 Jan 96 pp 1, 6

[Report by Hasan al-Luqays and Shafiq al-Asadi: "Bahrain: Severance of Relations With Iran Ruled Out"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Manama, Abu Dhabi, Riyadh, Jeddah, AL- HAYAH — In its routine session yesterday under Prime Minister Khalifah Bin-Salman Al Khalifah the Bahraini Council of Ministers praised "the position adopted by fraternal Arab states, the Arab League General Secretariat, and friendly states," valuing highly their "backing and support for the State of Bahrain in its handling of the emergency security situation and confrontation of the subversive elements and attempts to harm the homeland and its stability."

Gulf diplomatic and political sources in Manama have ruled out that Bahrain will sever its diplomatic relations with Tehran, even if the interrogations of those arrested prove Iran's involvement in the riot incidents. The sources believe that these relations could be blemished by a political escalation and an exchange of accusations or the downgrading of diplomatic representation between Bahrain and Iran. The sources also said that Bahrain does not want to unilaterally make a decision it believes is primarily a Gulf decision, because it will affect all the Gulf Cooperation Council states. Thus immediately after the announcement of the findings of the investigations with the detainees and the emergence of evidence of Iran's involvement in the incidents, Bahrain will coordinate and confer with the Damascus Declaration states to agree on the measures to be taken, taking account of the fact that Bahrain is a small state and always keen to maintain cordial relations with everyone, especially the neighboring states, provided these relations are based on mutual respect and noninterference in internal affairs.

The sources stress that if Bahrain manages to provide irrefutable evidence of Iran's interference in its internal affairs it will be able to persuade Gulf leaders to reconsider the policy of opening up to Tehran, which began after the war to liberate Kuwait in 1991.

As is known, Bahraini Ambassador to Iran Sami Khalil al-Mu'ayyad has not returned to his post in Tehran since 26 December 1994, that is since the previous incidents in Bahrain. He was recalled then by the Bahraini Foreign Ministry for consultation. [passage omitted]

Bahraini Prime Minister Views Domestic, Gulf Situation

LD2901220296 Riyadh SPA in Arabic 2105 GMT 29 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Manama, 29 Jan — Shaykh Khalifah Bin-Salman Al Khalifah, prime minister in the State of Bahrain, has affirmed that the people of Bahrain reject what some are circulating abroad about sectarianism and denominational conflicts. He said that we are all proud of belonging to the State of Bahrain [as] one people and all of us rally to work for its progress and the pursuit of development and growth.

In statements he gave to the British FINANCIAL TIMES correspondent when he received him in Manama, which were carried today by the Gulf News Agency [WAKH], he added that "we do not hide anything from our people, and the truth is known to all, and there is constant and continuous contact with all the citizens to listen to the different points of view within the framework of the existing legal channels." [passage omitted]

Regarding the role of the Bahraini Shura [Consultative] Council, the Bahraini prime minister stressed that the council is assuming an important and principal role with the government in formulating the state's general policy and serving the society's issues.

His Highness Shaykh Khalifah Bin-Salman Al Khalifah expressed his hope that any border dispute between any two brotherly countries will be solved by fraternal means.

Regarding the experiment of the Gulf Cooperation Council of the Arabian Gulf states, he said that the council is the appropriate form on which we can build a strong edifice. It is the true foundation for maintaining our unity, security, and stability, its policies will in the end bring benefits, and we hope that the mechanism inside it will be activated for faster movement and achievement.

Saudi Arabia

New Saudi Finance Minister Appointed by Royal Decree

LD2901152596 Riyadh Saudi Arabian Kingdom Radio Network in Arabic 1430 GMT 29 Jan 96

["Text" of royal decree issued in Riyadh on 29 January — read by announcer]

[FBIS Translated Text] With God's aid, we, Fahd Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz Al Sa'ud, of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia:

After taking note of Article 57 of the basic system of rule, issued by Royal Order No. A/90, dated 27 Sha'ban 1412 AH; and on the basis of the Council of Ministers rule promulgated by Royal Decree No. A/13, dated 3 Rabi's al-Awwal 1414 AH; and after taking note of Royal decree No. A/110, dated 25 Jumad al-Ula 1416 AH, we have ordered the following:

1. Dr. 'Ibrahim Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz al-'Assaf is appointed minister of finance and national economy.

2. His highness the deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers is to implement this order of ours.

[Signed] On his [as heard] behalf by 'Abdallah Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz Al Sa'ud

Saudi Prince Expresses 'Extreme Anger' With Kuwait Over Press Item

MM2601153996 London AL-QUDS AL-'ARABI in Arabic 26 Jan 96 p 1

[Unattributed report: "Silent Crisis in Saudi-Kuwaiti Relations Because of British Press Article"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] London, AL-QUDS AL-'ARABI — Saudi-Kuwaiti relations are currently witnessing a "silent crisis" because of a report distributed by the Kuwaiti National Assembly Foreign Affairs Committee, citing a British newspaper on domestic conditions in Riyadh, Saudi King Fahd's health, and the reported power struggle inside the ruling family.

Kuwaiti press reports said the day before yesterday that Prince Sultan Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz, [Saudi] second deputy prime minister and defense and aviation minister, had sent a protest message to Shaykh Sa'd al-'Abdallah, Kuwaiti heir apparent and prime minister, expressing his extreme anger at the large-scale distribution of the report in Kuwait. Diplomatic sources have said that what alarmed Prince Sultan most was the fact that a translation of the article in question was printed on official Kuwaiti National Assembly papers, and a very large number of copies of the article were printed — which granted it credibility among the people's circles. Copies of the article were deliberately circulated to Gulf and Arab embassies. [passage omitted]

The Kuwaiti Government has sent several official and parliamentary delegations to Riyadh to defuse the crisis and contain its effects, but it has not succeeded fully in its endeavor.

AL-QUDS AL-'ARABI has learned that the Saudi monarch, King Fahd Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz, asked the amir of Kuwait during his visit to Riyadh three months ago to pay the bulk of the financial burdens that the Kingdom shouldered to liberate Kuwait, which are estimated at about $80 billion. However, it has not been possible to learn what was the Kuwaiti response to this request. Gulf sources have said that Saudi Arabia was also unhappy with the statement signed by 10 Kuwaiti deputies urging Amir of Bahrain Shaykh 'Isa Bin-Hamad Al Khalifah to halt operations to suppress the opposition and to restore the Constitution and parliamentary freedoms. These deputies have been fiercely criticized by some Kuwaiti columnists close to the government.

Saudi Council of Ministers Condemns Acts Against Bahrain

LD3001002196 Riyadh SPA in Arabic 2345 GMT 29 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Riyadh, 29 Jan — His Royal Highness Prince 'Abdallah Bin-'Abd-al-'Aziz, the crown prince, deputy prime minister, and commander of the National Guards, reiterated, under the leadership of King Fahd Bin-'Abd-al-Aziz, custodian of the two holy mosques, the stance supporting Bahrain against plans of sabotage and those aiming at creating discord.

In a meeting of the Council of Ministers that he chaired at al-Yamamah Palace in Riyadh today, his highness described those acts as "strange to our societies and a desperate attempt to destroy Arab and regional security and stability." [passage omitted]

On the Palestinian issue, his highness stressed that the independent Palestinian State was upcoming, God willing, which is linked with the results obtained by the Palestinian elections that enabled the Palestinian people to practice their legitimate rights. [passage omitted]

Yemen

French Tourists Leave Sanaa on Board Yemeni Plane

JN3001063696 Paris Radio Monte Carlo in Arabic 0500 GMT 30 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The 17 French tourists who were held captive by a Yemeni tribe for four days to pressure the Yemeni authorities into releasing a tribesman held in custody for three months are now on en route to France on board a Yemeni plane that left Sanaa airport this morning. The plane will stop in Frankfurt on its way to Paris. The French tourists were released in accordance with an agreement reached between the Yemeni authorities and the kidnappers on 28 January.

Al-Iryani, Salih Discuss al-Hanish al-Kabir, Economy

JN2901193096 Sanaa Yemeni Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1715 GMT 29 Jan 96

[From the "News Follow-Up" program]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Brother President Lieutenant General 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih, accompanied by Vice President 'Abd-Rabbuh Mansur Hadi and House of Representatives Speaker Shaykh 'Abdallah Bin-Husayn al-Ahmar, met with party leaders and representatives of political organizations and independent deputies within the framework of the Ramadan evening meetings, which the brother president holds with the various factions and political forces.

Lengthy discussions were held on overall national concerns and issues. They also discussed developments in the Eritrean aggression against the Yemeni al-Hanish al-Kabir island, as well as the economic situation in light of the implementation of a comprehensive economic, financial, and administrative program. [passage omitted]

Dr. 'Abd-al-Karim al-Iryani, deputy prime minister and foreign minister, then briefed the audience on latest efforts to solve differences between our country and Eritrea on the maritime border, as well as the latest results of the French mediation. He said that the Yemeni leadership dealt wisely with the impact and developments of Eritrea's aggression on the Yemeni al-Hanish al-Kabir island and that it is trying to avoid any escalation that may create tension in the southern region of the Red Sea, which represents a vital sea route for international shipping and which cannot stand any threat to the security and safety of international shipping.

Al-Iryani said that many fraternal and friendly countries voiced their appreciation for Yemen's self-restraint toward the aggression, as well as its insistence on solving differences with Eritrea in a peaceful way based on the maritime law agreement and the rules of international law in order to ensure legitimate rights. He also said that our country has responded to all efforts out of its eagerness to solve the differences in a peaceful way, spare the region from tension, and enhance security, stability, and peace in the Red Sea region.

Al-Iryani added that the French mediation is proceeding positively because it is based on the idea that both sides should not resort to force during the negotiations but should accept arbitration and present their documents and maps. He said that Yemen has much evidence, documents, and legal and historical arguments stressing its legitimate rights in al-Hanish al-Kabir island. He also tackled the work of the Yemeni-Saudi joint committees, which were formed in accordance with the memorandum of understanding.

He said that the work of these committees are proceeding in a good way to translate the aspirations of the two fraternal and neighboring peoples for enhancing brotherly relations and finding a just and satisfactory solution to the border issue between the two countries for the benefit of the two peoples and to bolster the region's security and stability. [passage omitted]

The president then thanked the audience, and said: I thank the leaders of the parties and the representative of the independent deputies for attending the meeting and for their sound views, which the government will consider and will include in its measures to serve the higher national interests. The homeland is everybody's responsibility. We in the homeland—government and opposition—are the sons of the one homeland. [passage omitted]

Iraq-UN Dialogue on Oil for 'Humanitarian Needs' To Begin 6 Feb

JN2901172396 Baghdad INA in Arabic 1700 GMT 29 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] United Nations, 29 Jan (INA)—Iraq and the United Nations will begin on Tuesday, 6 February, a dialogue on oil for Iraq's humanitarian needs. The United Nations announced Monday [29 January] that Hans Corell, UN under secretary and head of UN Office of Legal Affairs, will lead its delegation to this dialogue. The United Nations also said that the Iraqi Government informed it that Dr. 'Abd-al-Amir al-Anbari, Iraq's permanent representative to the UNESCO headquarters, will lead the Iraqi delegation to this dialogue which will be held in New York.

Saddam, Ministers Discuss Improved Economic Conditions

JN2901142296 Baghdad Iraq Television Network in Arabic 1250 GMT 29 Jan 96

[Announcer-read report]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Leader President Saddam Husayn, may God protect and preserve him, chaired the sixth cabinet session in 1996.

The Cabinet discussed economic conditions and their improvement, in terms of the improved living conditions of our steadfast people and the drop in prices. The conferees underlined the need to maintain momentum in implementing the plan, which was adopted in light of the leader president's message to the Cabinet on 3 December 1995 and its positive impact on the economy.

The Cabinet studied reducing the 1996 budget by 50 percent of the 1995 budget in view of the drop in the price of labor, services, and commodities. The Cabinet decided to authorize the president of the republic to determine this or any other percentage at some other time.

The Cabinet stressed maintaining restrictions on the state's budget payments, with the exception of salaries, allocations, and wages for February and to keep it at the same level of January 1996. [passage omitted]

Iraqi Central Bank Governor Denies Current Notes To Be Canceled

JN2901175196 Baghdad INA in Arabic 1607 GMT 29 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Baghdad, 29 Jan (INA)—Iraqi Central Bank Governor Dr. 'Isam Rashid Huwaysh denied rumors about Iraq's intention to cancel the current Iraqi currency and issue a new alternative currency.

Dr. Huwysh told the IRAQI NEWS AGENCY that these rumors are sheer imagination and illogical.

He said: While the exchange rate of the Iraqi dinar doubled and the strength of the dinar was partially restored over the past days, the rumors mention the issuance of a new 5,000-dinar note and the cancellation of a currency that is steadily improving.

He stressed that Iraq's monetary situation is excellent, adding that the strength of any currency does not lie in the cover, but in the strength of the economy, because there is no currency in the world with a cover.

He referred to the signs of recovery in the Iraqi economy with the imminent lifting of the blockade. He said that the national currency has improved and its exchange rate has risen, something which refutes the tendentious calculations and rumors, about which the least that can be said is that they reflect naive and ignorant minds.

Dr. 'Isam Huwaysh described as unfounded the imaginary stories that claim that the government has closed money exchange companies and gold shops and that it imposed a new dollar exchange rate.

He said that the exchange and gold shops are open and exercising their activities completely freely.

The Central Bank governor said that Iraq's foreign general debt is low since no foreign debt has been acquired over the past five years. Therefore, he said, the Iraqi balance of payments will not be burdened by debts and their servicing, unlike most world states, especially the developing ones.

Dr. 'Isam Huwaysh referred to some rumors on plans to delete a zero from the Iraqi notes or that the central Bank will withdraw the 250-dinar or 100-dinar bills. He said these rumors are contradictory and prove the stupidity of those who spread them and their ignorance of the most basic rules of note issue.

He added that these lies represent an abortive offensive against Iraq by the enemies of Iraq.

Iraqi Central Bank Governor Denies Restrictions on Withdrawals

JN2901212296 Baghdad Iraq Television Network in Arabic 1800 GMT 29 Jan 96

[Announcer-read report]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Iraqi Central Bank Governor 'Isam Rashid Huwaysh denied rumors on limiting withdrawals from banks. In a statement to the IRAQI NEWS AGENCY today, he said that tendentious rumors are being spread to kill our people's happiness as they free themselves of the burdens of lean years caused by the unfair blockade that has been imposed on our patient, militant masses.

As part of those unfounded rumors, Dr. Huwaysh said, it is being said that withdrawals from banks have been limited. He indicated that notes are available at the Central Bank at quantities larger than needed for daily transactions. However, he said, the rush to purchase commodities made some citizens withdraw amounts from their financial assets after a long period of inability to provide most of their daily needs of commodities and food supplies, something which created pressure on the branch of a certain bank. Because that bank was unable to swiftly respond to clients' orders, overcrowdedness was caused, Huwaysh said.

He added that banks have been ordered to enable clients to withdraw all the amounts they wish to withdraw, even if this requires the banks to stay open beyond the normal working hours. He indicated that banks witnessed normal deposit and withdrawal operations today. [passage omitted]

Need To Limit Iraqi Government Spending Discussed

JN2601102096 Baghdad AL-JUMHURIYAH (AL-'UBUR Supplement) in Arabic 10 Jan 96 p 3

[Report on interview with Hisham al-Yawir, 'Abd-al-Rahman al-Juburi, and Muhsin al-Farhud, chairman, vice president, and secretary, respectively, of the Iraqi Economists Society, by Hayat 'Abd 'Ali; place and date not given]

[FBIS Translated Text] AL-'UBUR has interviewed three economic experts on their opinions about government spending and methods to reduce these expenditures and lower the high inflation rates that are witnessed by our national economy.

No doubt, attempts to limit government spending at this stage is one of the key ways to alleviate the effects of inflation, which is invading our lives and homes every day and every hour, placing a heavy burden on our low incomes.

How can a country that is going through unusual circumstances due to a mean general embargo, such as the suffocating one that the U.S.-Zionist coalition has imposed on our citizens, reach a budget that satisfies the citizens and also reduces government spending? This is the question we have put to experts at the Iraqi Economists Society. Their answers are as follows:

Hisham al-Yawir, chairman of the society, says: It is essential to limit government spending due to the lack of oil revenue as a result of the embargo that has been imposed on our people and homeland for more than five years. The lack of state revenue is also due to the weak productive sector and the shortage of raw materials and supplies. All this calls for reducing government spending, rationalizing expenses, and using available resources for profitable and highly productive projects to meet public demand. This is consistent with what the Iraqi Economics Society has proposed at several conferences.

['Abd 'Ali] Do you believe that a reduction in government spending will lead to a reduction in services to citizens?

[Al-Yawir] True, a reduction in government spending will lead to a reduction in the allocations for basic projects, including services, but we are not talking about services that affect the lives of the citizens directly. To avoid a reduction in the allocations for services, nongovernmental organizations in both the cooperative and private sectors should play a complementary role, provided the climate and rules are appropriate. I believe that cooperation among the various sectors at this stage will make up for any reduction resulting from government withdrawal from certain fields. It is important to create the right atmosphere and to provide legal support so that the various sectors can play their required role, whether on the level of internal distribution and services or the supply of some products through small, professional societies. All this cannot take place without the government providing certain facilities, at least at the initial stage.

['Abd 'Ali] Do you believe that the government's executive bodies can interpret future trends into a new economic policy?

[Al-Yawir] Indeed, the issue calls on the government's executive bodies to interpret these trends in a way that is consistent with the aims. The interpretation should not deviate from these aims. For example, one of the aims of our new economic policy is to withdraw liquidity and alleviate the effect of inflation due to a shortage of commodities and services. To achieve equilibrium in the prices of these commodities, we should try to supply them in a way that creates a balance between supply and demand and sets a suitable price ceiling. This will have a definite effect on the prices of all commodities and services.

I should warn, however, that withdrawing liquidity could lead to the emergence of new brokers and monopolists among the wealthy class who will try to exploit these commodities for their own purposes and for profit.

Withdrawing liquidity should not be an aim in itself, but a means to reduce the effects of the inflation.

Thus, we believe that these commodities should be introduced into the market gradually, while we expand the distribution outlets. Even cars can be sold gradually through distribution outlets or auction, so that supply will equal demand and create a price equilibrium for such goods and commodities.

'Abd-al-Rahman al-Juburi, director of the Arab Institute for Statistical Training and Studies and vice president of the Iraqi Economists Society, says: Our society supports the policy of reducing public spending. It has already made this recommendation at several conferences and has submitted a detailed study on the subject to the Professional Bureau of the Arab Socialist Ba'th Party. I believe that the policy of reducing government spending to curb inflation should have started with the onset of the general embargo on our country. Curbing inflation is an important economic aim. However, not all economic aims find a political solution, especially since we are being challenged by our enemies.

['Abd 'Ali] What do you say about the measures that are being taken here and there, but that have not succeeded in curbing inflation?

[Al-Juburi] Any measures taken here and there are bound to be fragmentary, because they do not take the whole situation into consideration. This is why prices are still going up despite such measures. If the issue had been strictly one of prices, it would have been easy to resolve. But it has two sides: a social side and a moral side.

['Abd 'Ali] Are you pessimistic?

[Al-Juburi] Never. But, there is no reason why we economists should not avoid outward appearances and concentrate on productive sectors, especially agriculture. We must develop this sector by exploiting every inch of land and every drop of water in Iraq. We must ensure a supply of fertilizers and improved seeds, because our land has been exhausted in recent years and needs to be revitalized. Moreover, we must ensure that the peasants receive seeds at the appropriate time and in the appropriate quantities from our existing stocks. Attention should also be paid to irrigation projects, expanding cultivation, and guaranteeing supplies, especially agricultural machines. One of the top priorities should be providing food and guaranteeing food security.

['Abd 'Ali] All that calls for government spending?

[Al-Juburi] Yes, but it is an expenditure on things that guarantee the continuity of our life. We should concentrate on productive projects and avoid unproductive ones.

['Abd 'Ali] How would you sum up the general outlines of the new economic policy?

[Al-Juburi] First: Reducing the issue of currency.

Second: Controlling government spending, especially unjustifiable expenditures.

Third: Reducing government spending on unproductive projects.

Fourth: Finding ways to motivate government workers to keep on working and to reduce the heavy burden of inflation on their incomes by supplying them with the industrial and agricultural products they need from our national production.

Fifth: Stimulating our agricultural sector by practical means rather than forums and meetings.

Sixth: Securing capital goods for the agricultural sector locally and at the appropriate time so as not to waste agricultural resources through lack of organization.

Seventh: Ministries should coordinate with other government departments and organizations on issues related to funds, machines, and vehicles, and not act independently. What is useful to the Ministry of Trade might not be useful to Baghdad Municipality. The ministry and the municipality are components of the state and their property is state property. This also applies to buildings and lands that may be redundant to one ministry but useful to another. The Ministry of Higher Education might need the property of the Ministry of Finance or the Ministry of Awqaf and so forth. Property that exceeds the needs of all ministries could then be sold.

Eighth: Establishing full control over the border exits to safeguard our national assets and valuable goods, because smuggling represents a huge national economic loss.

Muhsin al-Farhud, secretary of the society, says: I believe in the need to make our agricultural pricing policy attractive to the peasant so that he can increase production and thus fill the present gap in food supply and reduce the dependence on foreign imports. This will strengthen the country against the onslaught. The same applies to industry. The government should review the general situation of industry and make its resources serve the country, even if it meant suspending less productive production lines in the interest of other productive lines that make goods needed by the markets, especially food commodities.

Al-Farhud adds: The main challenge is food. Once we have overcome this problem, we will cross to the safe side of the river. What is required are concerted efforts to stop the deterioration of the economy. As an economist, I call for stimulating cross-border trade and developing markets and free zones to make them more effective and useful to all sectors of the government. They should be markets for well-planned trade in which all Iraqi economic sectors can participate — industry, trade, finance, military industrialization, oil, or agriculture. All of these sectors should be represented to make them more effective.

We must also think seriously about how to find sources of foreign currency for the Iraqi economy. This is the responsibility of the government authorities.

Al-Farhud concludes: On the issue of reducing expenditures, I would emphasize the need to immediately stop unproductive projects or those that take a long time to become productive. Their economic feasibility must be revised with the view to achieving additional value for the economy.

Nominations for Iraqi National Assembly Accepted Until 12 Feb

JN2901162796 Baghdad INA in Arabic 1415 GMT 29 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Baghdad, 29 Jan (INA)— It was announced here today that nominations for the elections of the National Assembly, the parliament, which will be held on 24 March, will be accepted as of today.

Shabib Lazim al-Maliki, minister of justice and member of the higher committee supervising the elections, said that the nominations will be accepted until 12 February.

A presidential decree was issued on 24 January setting the date for these elections. A decree issued by the Revolution Command Council, the highest legislative body, postponed the National Assembly elections in the electoral constituencies in Kurdistan Autonomous Region because it is impossible to hold elections there before the return of normal conditions. [passage omitted]

King Husayn Wishes People Progress Under Saddam Leadership

JN2901131996 Baghdad AL-QADISIYAH in Arabic 21 Jan 96 p 4

[Cable sent by King Husayn of Jordan to Iraqi President Saddam Husayn; date not given]

[FBIS Translated Text] Your Excellency brother Saddam Husayn, president of the Republic of Iraq and chairman of the Revolution Command Council, God's peace and blessings be upon you.

I am pleased to take the opportunity of our Muslim nation's celebrations of the advent of Holy Ramadan to send to your excellency, my good brother, on my own behalf and on behalf of the people and Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan our warmest heartfelt greetings and sincerest brotherly feelings. We beseech God Almighty to make this a month of blessings and fortune for all peoples of our Muslim nation, to accept from us all our fasting, and to guide us to do what pleases Him.

With my best wishes to you of continued good health, happiness, and joy and to the fraternal Iraqi people of continued progress and prosperity under your wise leadership.

Many happy returns.

[Signed] Your brother, Husayn

Jordan TV Broadcasts Discussion on Plight of Iraqis

JN2701075796

[FBIS Report] Amman Jordan Television Network in Arabic at 1713 GMT on 26 January carries a 45-minute program titled: "The Iraqi People: Their Plight and Future Prospects." The program is presented by Jordanian scholar Iyad al-Qattan, who coordinates a cultural discussion among three Iraqi scholars on the suffering of the Iraqi people. The Iraqi scholars are Dr. Fadil al-Jalabi, executive director of the Energy Studies Center in London, former under secretary of the Iraqi Oil Ministry, and former under secretary of OPEC; Baland al-Haydari, a poet; and Dr. Jalil al-'Atiyyah, a researcher, journalist, and author.

At the outset of the discussion, al-Jalabi reviews the history of the Iraqi people's suffering, which, he says, began after the start of the Iraq-Iran war and has continued through the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait to the current economic embargo on Iraq. While al-Jalabi is speaking, a short video clip shows Iraqi people selling their belongings in the streets in order to buy food. Al-Jalabi notes that Iraq has suffered approximately $400 billion in losses.

On the same subject, al-'Attiyah says the embargo on Iraq has had an adverse effect on the cultural, educational, and health sectors.

Al-Haydari says it is regrettable that Iraqi researchers, artists, and scholars are living abroad, which is a loss for Iraqi culture and civilization. Al-Haydari thanks the Arab Thought Forum for inviting Iraqi intellectuals to Amman to talk about the suffering of the Iraqi people. Al-Haydari notes that Jordan sympathizes with the suffering of the Iraqi people. Al-Haydari says that democracy and respect for human rights should exist in Iraq. He notes the need for a charter for Arab intellectuals that defends Arab culture.

Al-'Atiyyah says he hopes the political regime in Iraq will peacefully reconcile with the Iraqi people and stop their suffering. He hopes for democratic reforms in Iraq.

Al-Jalabi says Arab intellectuals should write about oppression and the true suffering in Iraq. Al-Jalabi says: "The Iraqi opposition is divided. It cannot make a change by itself. The opposition can be a factor in realizing change, mobilizing opinions, or clarifying economic, intellectual, and political formulas to realize change." Al-Jalabi notes that Jordan is the only country that has called for protecting Iraqi human rights.

The discussion concludes by focusing on a mechanism to ease the suffering of the Iraqi people. The scholars point out that Iraqi intellectuals can play a role in making the world understand the plight of the Iraqi people and work toward lifting the embargo on Iraq. The program ends at 1758 GMT.

Iraqi Arab League Envoy Cited on Coordination With Syria

JN2901174196 Paris Radio Monte Carlo in Arabic 1600 GMT 29 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] At the end of his meeting with Arab League Secretary General 'Ismat 'Abd-al-Majid in Cairo today, Nabil Najm, Iraq's permanent representative at the Arab League, said: Baghdad is very interested in coordinating with Syria, as well as with Turkey, on the issue of water within the framework of good neighborly relations. Nabil Najm noted that a Syrian-Iraqi meeting will be held in the Syrian capital within days, adding that experts from both countries will take part in this meeting to discuss the issue of water. He said that this meeting is a continuation of the meetings of the Iraqi-Syrian-Turkish committee, which has been boycotted by Turkey since late 1992.

The Iraqi official said that Syria has not yet responded to Iraq's request to hold a bilateral ministerial meeting under the Arab League sponsorship to coordinate with Syria regarding the issue of water. He added that Iraq wants to reach a solution to the distribution of the Tigris and Euphrates water in a way that guarantees the rights of both Arab countries in accordance with international law.

Iraqi Opposition Reports Baghdad Explosion, Regime's Military Problems

MM2901163096 London AL-HAYAH in Arabic 29 Jan 96 p 5

[Unattributed report: "Reports of Destruction of Iraqi Aircraft, Explosion in Officers Building]

[FBIS Translated Text] London, AL-HAYAH— The Iraqi Broadcasting Corporation, which belongs to the opposition Unified Iraqi National Congress, has said an Iraqi MiG-25 from the al-Qadisiyah air base in the al-Baghdadi area, al-Anbar Governorate, crashed in the first week of the month and that two pilots holding the rank of major were killed.

A bulletin issued by the corporation, of which AL-HAYAH received a copy yesterday, stressed that Flight Captain Muhammad Ghazi al-Nasiri was found dead in his car on 22 January in al-Yarmuk district in Baghdad. The corporation pointed out that the pilot's father is Ghazi al-Nasiri, governor of Tikrit.

The corporation said that a device exploded in the central officers building in the al-A'zamiyah area on 15 January, pointing to security disruption in Baghdad and other Iraqi cities.

The corporation's correspondent in Karkuk said in the second week of this month that President Saddam Husayn issued instructions to move combat aircraft and helicopters from the air bases in Karkuk to other bases in central Iraq "for fear of their defection to the liberated areas in Iraqi Kurdistan, especially after the defection of a helicopter in the last week of 1995. The pilot was Major 'Imad Hamad Salman al-Dulaymi"

The corporation stressed that the al-Hurriyah base in Karkuk has been closed.

The corporation pointed in another bulletin to the dismantling of the MiG-29 aircraft at the Tammuz base in al-Habbaniyah because these aircraft cannot be used in combat operations without maintenance.

The bulletin added that the reason for dismantling the aircraft is Baghdad's inability to service them, "let alone the severe spare parts shortage the military sectors are suffering.

The regime had 14 MiG-29 aircraft before the invasion of Kuwait. After the Gulf war it was left with only nine as a result of the defection of the other aircraft to Iran or their destruction by coalition forces. Another aircraft tried to defect last year but it crashed and its pilot, Muhammad Dahawi al-Dulaymi, was killed. So the Iraqi Air Force now has eight MiG-29 aircraft."

The corporation stressed that Baghdad moved a number of MiG aircraft from al-Qadisiyah base in al-Baghdadi, al-Anbar Governorate, to Tammuz base in al-Habbaniyah.

PUK Prepared To 'Normalize' Situation in Kurdistan

NC2901171396 (Clandestine) Voice of the People of Kurdistan in Arabic 1500 GMT 29 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Jalal Talabani, Patriotic Union of Kurdistan [PUK] secretary general, has reiterated that the PUK is prepared to normalize the situation and establish peace and stability in Kurdistan as quickly as possible. He was speaking at a meeting with a delegation of PUK organizations at his headquarters in Irbil yesterday evening. Noting the current situation in Kurdistan, Iraq, and the region, he said that our conflict with the Kurdistan Democratic Party [KDP] is secondary; our main and basic conflict is with the ruling dictatorial regime in Baghdad. He pointed out that compared to this main conflict, all other conflicts are secondary and can be negotiated.

He noted that the KDP is trying to switch concentration on the main conflict. We are opposed to this. [passage omitted]

PUK's Talabani Views Situation in Iraqi Kurdistan

LD3001093896 Tehran IRNA in English 0834 GMT 30 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Jan. 30, IRNA — Leader of Patriotic Union of Iraqi Kurdistan (PUK), Jalal Talabani, said the Iraqi dictatorship has divided Arab countries by beginning a war among Arabs.

In an interview with the English-language daily 'TEHRAN TIMES' on Tuesday [30 January], he commented on the situation in Iraq and the Iraqi Kurdistan.

On the situation in Iraq, he said the Iraqi people are suffering from starvation and high inflation, adding that the problems of Iraqi Kurdistan cannot be separated from the problems of Iraq as the root of such issues is the Iraqi dictatorship.

"Unless the dictatorship comes to an end and a popular regime is established, the problems of the Iraqi people, including Iraqi Kurdistan, will remain," he underlined.

Assessing the scenario in Iraqi Kurdistan, Talabani stated, "It is true that the economic situation is bad, but for the first time Iraqi Kurdistan is free and the Kurds are not ruled by Iraq. For the first time all Kurds are enjoying democratic rights, freedom of speech, having newspapers, political parties, television, radio..."

With regards to aid from foreign organizations, the PUK leader noted, "Unfortunately what we receive from donors are not what we need. They do not go toward rehabilitating our agriculture. They do not support reconstruction of main roads. They are sending us things that are not so beneficial for the Iraqi Kurds. The U.N. is also helping, but not in the right way."

As to the visit of an Iranian delegation to Iraqi Kurdistan, Talabani termed his discussions with the Iranian delegation as pleasant and fruitful, adding, "We believe the Islamic Republic can solve the turmoil in Iraqi Kurdistan. Iran understands our problems and can find a solution."

He said that he joins Iran in opposing the use of Iraqi territory for activities aimed against the Islamic Republic, stressing that no armed group has the right to use Iraqi Kurdistan as a military base against Iran.

Talabani disclosed that to date, 25 members of the outlawed terrorist organizations who had been engaged in operations directed against Iran have been arrested.

KDP, Other Parties Ready To Implement U.S. Peace Plan

JN2901193996 (Clandestine) Voice of Iraqi Kurdistan in Arabic 1800 GMT 29 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] In the presence of brothers from the Central Office for National Relations, Sami 'Abd-al-Rahman and Fadil Mirani, members of the Kurdistan Democratic Party [KDP] Political Bureau, received a senior delegation from eight Kurdish parties at 1000 on 29 January. [passage omitted]

During the cordial meeting, the conferees discussed the recently tense situation. The brothers in the KDP explained our party's position on the phases of negotiations, the U.S. mediation, and the monitoring of the INC [Iraqi National Congress]. They added that the KDP is fully committed to cease-fire and is ready to implement the U.S. peace plan.

The KDP officials also frankly announced that peace is the only way to save the Kurdish people from this ordeal. They added that peace is also a guarantee for the return of legitimacy and for preserving the unity of Kurdistan's land.

The two sides stressed the need to implement, render successful, and speed up the peace plan. Views were close between the KDP and the eight parties. The meeting, which lasted for approximately one hour, concluded in a successful way.

Iraqi Paper Criticizes Iran's Interference in Kurdistan

JN2901142896 Baghdad INA in Arabic 1005 GMT 29 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Baghdad, 29 Jan (INA) — An Iraqi newspaper says the Iranian regime's attitude toward Iraq is marked by contradiction, double-dealing, imbalance, provocation, and distortion of facts.

In a commentary today, AL-THAWRAH, which speaks for the Arab Socialist Ba'th Party, adds that the Tehran regime has gone too far in its interference in Iraq's domestic affairs by exploiting the anomalous situation in the Kurdistan Autonomous Region. The Tehran regime disregards its own domestic situation, the crisis it is going through, and the qualitative shift in the power struggle in Iran.

The paper adds: The Iranian regime is desperately trying to get away from the abyss that is waiting for it. It is doing that by seeking to play roles outside the country to relieve itself of its domestic crisis. The Iranian regime, however, has lost this chance, now that it is in the grip of power struggle.

The paper concludes that Iran is currently witnessing an overwhelming revolutionary upsurge to break the slavery to backwardness and to the despotic ruling clique that has relinquished Iran's key interests and the future of the Iranians.

Iraq Protests Allied Airspace 'Violations' to Arab League

JN2601184496 Baghdad INA in Arabic 1730 GMT 26 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 26 Jan (INA) — Iraq sent a protest to the Arab League citing violations of its airspace by U.S., British, and French warplanes which take off from bases in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

In a message sent to 'Ismat 'Abd-al-Majid, Arab League secretary general, today, Iraq's Arab League representative said that these warplanes continue to violate Iraqi airspace and carried out 545 air sorties between 1 and 15 January.

He asked the Arab League secretary general to intercede with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to halt these violations, which conflict with the Arab League Charter, the Joint Arab Defense Pact, the UN Charter, and the provisions of international law.

In his message, which included a detailed list of these violations, the Iraqi representative held Saudi Arabia and Kuwait fully responsible for the damages these violations have inflicted on the Iraqi people and the Republic of Iraq. He stressed Iraq's right to compensation for these damages in accordance with the principle of international responsibility. He also asked that this message be distributed among the Arab League member states to acquaint them with these regrettable facts.

Baraq Sees No Need for U.S. Effort To Bridge Gap With Syria

TA3001095296 Jerusalem THE JERUSALEM POST in English 30 Jan 96 p 1

[Report by Steve Rodan]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Foreign Minister Ehud Baraq said yesterday that he opposes allowing the U.S. to raise proposals to narrow the gap with Syria in an effort to reach a peace accord this year. "I don't think American bridging proposals are the most effective way to reach an agreement," he told the Foreign Press Association. "I think the best way is for both sides to reach it by themselves."

Baraq's position differs from that of Prime Minister Shim'on Peres, who supported U.S. proposals to advance the negotiations during his trip to Washington in December.

Talks between Israel and Syria continued last night in Maryland following the weekend break.

Israeli sources said last week that they expect Washington to formally submit its plan to resolve the remaining disputes, should Secretary of State Warren Christopher fail to significantly narrow the gaps during his Middle East shuttle next week.

Baraq, however, said he does not see any need for such an American effort. He said that during his U.S. visit last week, President Bill Clinton said the substance of the Israel-Syrian talks was more important than meeting any deadlines, either for the Israeli or U.S. elections.

"It is too early for any kind of bridging proposals," Baraq said, "the nature of which should be to bridge something not very wide. Otherwise, you might violate the principles of one side."

Israeli officials, including Minister Yosi Beilin, said that they don't expect an accord to be reached this year unless the Syrians change their positions on several key issues during Christopher's upcoming trip.

Baraq said Israel and Syria have advanced somewhat in their negotiations, particularly in warming up the atmosphere. But he doubted whether an accord could be reached this year, citing significant disagreements on water rights and security arrangements.

"After the next visit by Secretary Christopher, or a week or two later, we will be able to make a judgment if the ground is right for a fully detailed agreement," Baraq said. "Any type of serious solutions will take long negotiations with many ups and downs."

Baraq said that he advocates Israeli control of all the water flowing into the Lake Tiberias. He said security arrangements must ensure the Syrians cannot stage a surprise attack and decrease the possibility of a major Syrian military offensive.

[Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew at 0900 GMT on 30 January adds: "Foreign Minister Ehud Baraq said that the rate of progress at the Maryland talks conforms to the nature of the dialogue and is therefore necessarily slow. Baraq said that the very fact that progress was achieved should be viewed with satisfaction. The foreign minister explained that the rate of progress is determined primarily by Syria's positions. In an interview with our correspondent Gay Qotev, Foreign Minister Baraq said that progress in the negotiations with Syria and the issue of early elections should not be linked. Baraq refused to say whether or not he supports early elections."]

Baraq Briefs Foreign Journalists on Aims of Syria Talks

TA2901165096 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1600 GMT 29 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Foreign Minister Ehud Baraq says the talks with the Syrians are centering on two main issues: the security arrangements and water. Referring to the security arrangements, the foreign minister said these arrangements must prevent the possibility of a sudden attack on Israel, decrease the size of the forces on the ground, and prevent the possibility of indirect confrontations. Referring to the water issue, the foreign minister reiterated his position that we must ensure that all the water flowing to Lake Tiberias today remains in Israel's hands in the future as well.

Baraq said we will be able to discuss the depth of withdrawal only after the problems of water and terrorism are solved and after the necessary security arrangements are achieved. Our political correspondent Shlomo Raz reports that the foreign minister was addressing the Foreign Press Association in Jerusalem.

Israel's Shahal, Baraq Call For 'Firm Steps' Following Janin Attack

TA3001102096 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1000 GMT 30 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Public Security Minister Moshe Shahal said he takes a very grave view of today's terrorist attack in Janin. Shahal noted that firm steps should be taken vis-a-vis the Palestinian Authority. Foreign Minister Ehud Baraq described the attack as very serious. Baraq said that the government and the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] will take decisive action to prevent the recurrence of such incidents.

Israel's Lubrani on 'War of Attrition' in South Lebanon

TA3001072296 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0505 GMT 30 Jan 96

[Telephone interview with Uri Lubrani, Israel's coordinator of government activities in Lebanon, by anchorman Me'ir Einstein; place not given — live]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Einstein] Good morning to Uri Lubrani, coordinator of government activities in Lebanon.

[Lubrani] Good morning.

[Einstein] Could one say that the residents in southern Lebanon are increasingly inclined to cooperate with the terrorist organizations out of fear of what awaits them in the event of an arrangement between Israel, Syria, and Lebanon?

[Lubrani] It is clear that as the peace process progresses, with the accompanying feeling that Israel will pull out of the security zone at some point, the local residents fear for their future, and some of them undoubtedly are trying to prove their loyalty to the other side. Such a phenomenon certainly exists, although it is quite rare and definitely does not manifest itself in any extensive way. Nevertheless, it clearly exists.

[Einstein] How does one deal with this problem? What is being done to allay their fears?

[Lubrani] I think it is impossible to totally reassure them. This is part of our current reality. It is not as though this phenomenon did not exist in the past; however, the situation has become more pressing now because of the feeling that the peace process is making progress. We are doing a very good job of dealing with this. We take care of the local population on an ongoing basis. The Israeli Government has made several declarations, and the prime minister himself, 10 days ago, avowed our determination not to leave the security zone without ensuring the safety, well-being, and security of this population. This is part of the war. We are engaged in a war of attrition there. They are trying to undermine the security zone in various ways. There is no calm in the security zone; there is constant activity. They are trying to tire us out even before the negotiations, but they will not succeed.

[Einstein] Does the recent attempt to detonate a car bomb indicate an exacerbation in terrorist activity in the area?

[Lubrani] I do not think there has been either an increase or a reduction in terrorist activity. Someone is trying to tell us that the fact that our delegations are negotiating at Wye Plantation will not bring about a reduction in their activity. Fortunately for us, the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] and SLA [South Lebanese Army] thwart their activities. Many operations are not even reported by the media. In any event, there has been no reduction in the level of activity there.

[Einstein] Thank you, Mr. Lubrani.

Netanyahu Assesses Israel's Economic Future Under Likud

MS3001110996 London FINANCIAL TIMES in English 5 Jan 96 p 30

[Report on interview with Benjamin Netanyahu, leader of Israeli Likud party, by Julian Ozanne and Quentin Peel, place and date not given: "An Economic Vision Israelis Are Ignoring"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Mr Benjamin Netanyahu, leader of the Israeli rightwing opposition Likud party, is a man with a glowing vision of Israel's economic future.

He believes the country could double its per capita income and double its population in the next 15 years to become a high-technology "tiger."

He advocates sweeping privatisation of state-owned enterprises, and deregulation of business, to push Israel into the ranks of the top 15 economies in the world.

Unfortunately for him, he is not sure the Israeli voters are bothered. "They are just not going to pay attention to this," he said in an interview.

"The agenda is dominated by something else... Israel is probably the most advanced semi-socialist economy in the world. But they just don't know exactly what I am talking about. Things are not bad enough for them to cry out for change."

As he admits, the elections, due by October 29 this year, will be decided above all by attitudes towards the Arab-Israeli peace process. And on that dominant electoral issue he faces an uphill battle convincing voters he has a viable policy.

Mr Netanyahu was making headway last year against Labour Prime Minister Yitzhaq Rabin's peace agreement with Palestinians.

Throughout 1995, opinion polls put him well ahead of Mr Rabin in a country deeply divided about its difficult relationship with its Arab neighbours.

Mr Rabin's murder last November by a rightwing assassin changed all that.

It led to a backlash against the Likud party and galvanised the country behind Mr Shim'on Peres, Rabin's successor. Recent polls show Mr Netanyahu trailing Mr Peres by at least 20 points.

Yet the Likud leader believes many Israelis are deeply uncomfortable with the peace agreement with the Palestinian leader, Mr Yasir 'Arafat. "The Israeli public... don't want a fully fledged Palestinian state touching every part of Israel," he said.

Mr Netanyahu is a U.S.-educated, fast-talking 46-year-old, in sharp contrast to his more traditional Likud predecessors — Mr Menachem Begin and Mr Yitzhaq Shamir.

He says the Israeli-Palestinian agreements have failed on two levels. First, they have not delivered acceptable security guarantees. Second, Mr 'Arafat, unlike King Husayn of Jordan, has not genuinely embraced peace with Israel and made efforts to achieve a psychological transformation in Palestinian society from enmity to peace.

Mr Netanyahu's alternative policy to a peace process expected to produce an independent Palestinian state centres on a highly limited form of autonomy.

The problem with this policy, as most Israelis know, is that no Palestinian leader would have signed such a deal.

Unlike previous Likud leaders, Mr Netanyahu, a graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, is more attuned to the new information age. But his personal political style, like that of his economic vision, seems unlikely to win many votes.

Nevertheless, he believes the flaws in the agreement and the fears among Israelis about their future security will prove an electoral asset and he is confident he can win the elections.

"The main transformation we shall effect is in the economic and social position of Israel. It is one of those paradoxes where Rabin was elected on a domestic reform programme and effected an external transformation of foreign policy. I will do the precise reverse."

Jerusalem's Olmert: Situation in Territories 'Irreversible'

TA2901135796 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1300 GMT 29 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert says that if the Likud wins the elections, it will have to continue the political process from the point reached by the present government. Olmert maintains that the Likud must recognize the situation in the territories because the facts there are irreversible. Our party affairs correspondent Yaron Deqel reports that the Likud's political forum reconvened today to discuss the proposal to recognize the Palestinian Authority headed by Yasir 'Arafat if the Palestinian Covenant is canceled.

Earlier today it was reported that Tel Aviv Mayor Roni Milo has said that in the present situation it is necessary to speak with PLO representatives.

Israeli Minister Aloni Informs Council of Resignation, Criticizes Meretz

TA2801195496 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1900 GMT 28 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Minister Shulamit Aloni tonight informed the CRM [Citizens Rights Movement, a Meretz component] Council that she will not run on the Meretz ticket in the next Knesset elections, but she did not say whether she planned to establish a new body.

Shulamit Aloni leveled harsh criticism at the Meretz movement, noting that her associates had deserted her. She said that Meretz deferred the issue of human rights in the name of peace and was prepared to endorse religious legislation on behalf of Arye Der'i and of SHAS [Torah Observing Sephardim]. I remained alone, I was portrayed as a blabbermouth and a ridiculous person, Ms. Aloni accused her associates. She revealed that she had planned to resign at the end of the Knesset term, but due to the alienation among the Meretz leaders, she decided on an early departure. I am CRM and I believe in its ideology, Shulamit Aloni said in conclusion. She did not reveal what her plans for the future were.

Our party affairs correspondent Yaron Deqel notes that Aloni did not mention Minister Yosi Sarid, but her entire audience understood her criticism to be mainly directed at him. Minister Sarid is slated to address the CRM Council convention at Ef'al later tonight.

IDF General's Plan: No Fence Along West Bank Dividing Line

TA2901185996 Tel Aviv IDF Radio in Hebrew 1500 GMT 29 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] A separation fence will not be built along the dividing line. The settlements in the area will be defended by the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] and the police in a territorial defense concept, IDF and police commanders reported to the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee today.

Major General Matan Vilna'i, deputy chief of staff, informed the committee of a 60 percent rise in crime in the dividing line area last year compared to 1994. He said the main problem in the area is crime and not security offenses. Our Knesset correspondent Hadas Vismonsky reports:

[Begin recording] [Vismonsky] There are 84 settlements located along the dividing line, where some 800 Jewish inhabitants live, and they are suffering a 60 percent rise in crime in 1995 compared to the previous year. These data were presented to the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee by Gen. Matan Vilna'i's team, which worked out a plan to defend the dividing line. We are aware of the inhabitants' eroded feeling of security, but crime cannot be totally prevented, Vilna'i told the committee. We have avoided marking a new Green Line; therefore, a separation fence will not be built and not all the settlements will be encircled by fences or illuminated by emergency lighting.

Committee Chairman Hagay Merom believes that the settlements will not have sufficient defense without a fence.

[Merom] The plan does not contain defense components, which these settlements need. Components approved in the past, such as fences, lighting, etc., have been removed as though they never existed.

[Vismonsky] The police representatives said that police activity in the area will be bolstered. New stations will be set up and manpower will be added. The cost of the plan is 190 million shekels, and Deputy Defense Minister Ori Or totally supports it.

[Or] The dispute is over principles. It is my belief that there should not be a fence along the dividing line. I think that the war will be won when the desire to fight no longer exists.

[Vismonsky] Hundreds of thousands of Jews cannot be fenced in, Gen. Vilna'i said. The plan will now be presented for cabinet approval. [end recording]

Al-Hariri: 'Syria Will Not Move a Step Ahead' of Lebanon

MM2901153996 London AL-HAYAH in Arabic 27 Jan 96 pp 1, 6

[Unattributed report: "Syria Will Not Surpass Us"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Beirut, AL-HAYAH — Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri stressed yesterday that the Lebanese and Syrian tracks are moving side by side and that Syria will not move a single step ahead of Lebanon or vice versa.

On the eve of the Lebanese-Syrian Higher Council, headed by Presidents Ilyas al-Hirawi and Hafiz al-Asad, which will convene to coordinate positions on the negotiations, al-Hariri stressed that "we will obtain our rights with dignity."

He added in a statement yesterday that "great tasks are ahead of us. At the local level, we have the elections, whose early signs have begun to emerge, as we have seen in the Chamber of Deputies over the past two days. The most important task is liberating our land in the south and in western al-Biqa'. This is the main thing the entire country is waiting for: the liberation of the land and the restoration of sovereignty over the occupied Lebanese territories."

He said that "the negotiations are developing, and we have noticed that one day we hear positive news only to hear negative news the following day. The situation will continue in the same manner until an agreement is reached. However, when such an agreement is reached, it will be between Lebanon and Israel and between Syria and Israel at the same time: Syria will not move a step ahead of us, nor will we move a step ahead of it." [passage omitted]

Negotiations Under Way for Repatriation of Palestinians in Lebanon

MM2901150996 London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic 29 Jan 96 p 5

[Report by Khalid al-Gharbi: "Palestinian-Lebanese Negotiations Include Organizing Repatriation of Those Joining Self-Rule Police"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Sidon (southern Lebanon) — Palestinian circles in camps in southern Lebanon are eagerly awaiting the outcome of the negotiations due to take place between the PLO and the Lebanese authorities, which will include the "civil, political, and social rights of the Palestinians" in addition to the issue of repatriating hundreds of young people to Gaza to join the Palestinian police, in accordance with the lists that camp officials have received from the self-rule authority.

In this context an informed Palestinian source has told AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT that Faruq al-Qaddumi — "Abu-al-Lutf" — head of the PLO political department, will travel to Beirut in the next few days via Damascus to reactivate the discussion of Palestinian affairs in Lebanon, an issue unresolved for three years and which includes the Palestinians' demand to "ease the security measures imposed by the Lebanese Government on the entry and exit of Palestinians." The source added that Palestinians attach a great deal of importance to the part dealing with the political agreement on the repatriation of hundreds of young Palestinians to the self-rule area to join the Palestinian police.

The Palestinian source expects mutual arrangements to be reached soon between security officials, making it possible to implement the political agreement on repatriating the police elements.

In this context, a Palestinian source in the al-Rashidiyah camp (near the southern city of Tyre) has said that some Palestinian officials met during the last 24 hours with political and security officials to speed up the repatriation process and agree details with the Lebanese side. The source stressed that this issue is in the advanced stages and that contacts will continue with the Lebanese officials.

AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT has learned that the repatriation operation will be carried out either by sea with French or Egyptian boats, or by air with airplanes from the Gulf, with the air option being the more likely. The returnees from Lebanon will be taken to a rehabilitation camp for a short period during which they will be divided into groups, with each group to be transferred to a specific self-rule area.

Reports indicate that a substantial number of media people and health and social services employees will leave with the first group.

It has been learned that the Palestinian leadership has told all those whose names have been listed that "they must wear their military uniform and take their personal weapons with them." AL- SHARQ AL-AWSAT has also learned that the leading Palestinians who have obtained approval to transfer to the self-rule areas are: Colonel Muti' Abu-al-Layl, Khairi Abu-al-Hajj, Antar Salamah, Lieutenant Colonel Muhammad 'Ali, Fatah official in the Sidon area, Mahir Shabatiyah, and Major Tawfiq, who all held leadership positions in Lebanon and had security and military responsibilities within Fatah, in addition to a number of other officials in the second leadership echelon.

Transfer of Palestinians Needs Syrian-Lebanese Approval

MM2901163196 London AL-HAYAH in Arabic 29 Jan 96 p 2

[Unattributed report: "Abu-al-'Aynayn Confirms al-Shayib's Statements; Arrangements Depend on Approval of Damascus and Beirut"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Beirut — In an interview with AL-HAYAH in his office in the al-Rashidiyah camp, Colonel Sultan Abu-al-'Aynayn, Fatah secretary in Lebanon, said: "We have received confirmation from Palestinian President Yasir 'Arafat of the need to prepare a Palestinian force of 500 fighters from all the Palestinian camps in Lebanon who will travel to the self-rule area as soon as the necessary arrangements have been completed between the Palestinian central political leadership, the Lebanese Government, and the brother officials in Syria."

Abu-al-'Aynayn denied that any specific time has been set for the transfer of Palestinian fighters from Lebanon to the self-rule area in the Gaza Strip and on the West Bank, saying: "So far, no arrangements have been made with regard to an agreement on how the fighters will travel to join the Palestinian police."

He added: "The issue is being examined, and so far no preliminary contacts have been made. On our side, we shall not carry out measures which require a Palestinian-Lebanese-Syrian agreement. When this agreement is reached, we shall act according to the Palestinian political leadership's instructions."

Abu-al-'Aynayn denied recent reports of meetings between Palestinian officials from the Fatah movement loyal to 'Arafat and Lebanese security officials, saying: "These rumors are groundless. All I can confirm is that these contacts depend on a Palestinian-Lebanese-Syrian understanding, and this has not been achieved yet."

On the number of fighters who will travel to the self-rule area, he said: "The number will not be less than 500 fighters, which is part of the total number that will leave Lebanon, which as far as we know amounts to some 1,200 fighters, based on the confirmation received from brother Abu-'Ammar [Yasir 'Arafat]."

He pointed out that the total will be assembled "from all Palestinian camps in Lebanon, bearing in mind that nothing is final before a political agreement is reached."

In response to a question, Abu-al-'Aynayn said: "Before, we had not received confirmation from the Palestinian leadership with regard to preparing the number of fighters in the first group. Today, however, we received confirmation with instructions to start preparing the force from a logistic point of view."

It should be mentioned that Khalid al-Shayib, Fatah militia leader in the 'Ayn al-Hulwah camp, said some two weeks ago that he had received instructions from Palestinian President Yasir 'Arafat to prepare lists of the names of 500 fighters — officers and soldiers — in preparation for making the necessary arrangements to ensure their transfer to the self-rule area to join the Palestinian police.

A Fatah official loyal to 'Arafat in the 'Ayn-al-Hulwah camp, who refused to disclose his name, said: "We were right to talk about starting preparations to transfer 450 Palestinian fighters from Lebanon to the West Bank. Abu-al-'Aynayn's statement only confirms the information received in brother Abu-'Ammar's telegram." Asked why the Fatah secretary denied this information, he told AL-HAYAH: "He is free to confirm or deny these reports. However, the position that he has announced proves that we were right and did not invent this information."

A Fatah official confirmed that during the past two days a preliminary meeting was held with a Lebanese security official to discuss the field preparations for the force which will leave for the self-rule area, pointing out that "the group announced by Abu-al-'Aynayn is not the group which we recently announced."

He added: "The total number of fighters who will leave the Palestinian camp is about 500 fighters, and they will leave in two groups, as part of the total number of 1,200 fighters."

The Fatah official pointed out that no practical steps had been taken, apart from preparing travel documents for the fighters on the list received by fax from the Palestinian leadership.

He predicted that the situation with regard to Lebanese-Palestinian contacts will crystallize in the coming days, and ruled out any agreement without Syrian approval. He added: "This issue will not be resolved without high-level contacts," explaining that "any such agreement has a price, because, in politics, you cannot have something for nothing."

The Fatah official did not disclose the nature of the political price that the Palestinian leadership would have to pay in return for the agreement to repatriate the fighters.

Israeli Shelling, Lebanese 'Resistance' Attacks Reported

NC3001081296 Ba'labakk Voice of the Oppressed in Arabic 0630 GMT 30 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The Zionist occupation forces carried out fierce attacks on the central sector's villages yesterday. The Zionists bombarded the outskirts of Haddathah, Bra'shit, and Sribbin. Shells landed near UN positions in Bra'shit. Meanwhile, enemy helicopters flew over the targeted areas and strafed nearby valleys with machine guns.

Elsewhere, Zionist forces pounded Jabal al-Za'tar with 155-mm shells. Enemy helicopters flew over Jabal 'Ali al-Tahir, which overlooks al-Nabatiyah and nearby villages.

In retaliation for the Zionist attacks, an Islamic Resistance group attacked the occupation forces' positions, using machine guns and rockets, inflicting several casualties.

Car Bomb Explodes, Driver Killed in South Lebanon

TA2901171996 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1500 GMT 29 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] A car bomb carrying 300 kg of explosives blew up near the village of Markaba in south Lebanon this afternoon. The driver of the car was killed. Our correspondent in the north Ilan Ro'e reports that IDF [Israel Defense Forces] officers believe the car bomb was meant to be used in a terror attack against IDF and SLA [South Lebanese Army] forces.

SLA Radio Reports on Car Explosion in South Lebanon

NC3001090796 Kafr Killa Voice of the South in Arabic 0800 GMT 30 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Uri Lubrani, coordinator of the Israeli Government's activities in Lebanon, stressed that the explosion of the booby-trapped car near the village of Markaba is a reminder to those who believe that the peace negotiations have brought peace to northern Israel and southern Lebanon. Lubrani noted that the blast could have caused a major catastrophe, adding that it demonstrates that the war in Lebanon is still going on.

A booby-trapped Mercedes exploded near Hula two days ago. The driver had tried to enter the border strip on a dirt road, but the car blew up, killing all the terrorists inside it. The explosion left a crater with a six-meter radius and two meters deep.

Security sources in the region stress that the car was dispatched by Hizballah to carry out a terrorist operation against the South Lebanese Army [SLA] and the Israeli Army forces in the region.

Syrian Minister Rules Out Talks With Israel on Water Issue

MM3001110996 London AL-HAYAH in Arabic 30 Jan 96 pp 1, 6

[Report by Muhammad 'Allam: "Syrian Information Minister: Golan Waters To Be Discussed in Multilaterals"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Damascus, Cairo — In a statement to AL-HAYAH yesterday, Syrian Information Minister Dr. Muhammad Salman stressed his country's refusal to discuss the water issue "bilaterally" with Israel in the U.S.-sponsored negotiations being held in the State of Maryland. He pointed out that the water issue, about which the Israelis have been talking for some time, should be discussed in "the multilateral negotiations" with the participation of Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and Israel after "fundamental progress" is in the bilateral negotiations.

Dr. Salman spoke to AL-HAYAH after the statements made by Israeli Foreign Minister Ehud Baraq in which he stressed that Israel will not offer "any concessions" to Syria with regard to the Golan waters, "because it is has a pressing need for the water flowing from the Golan into Lake Tiberias," and after the assertion by other Israeli officials that the Golan secures about 30 percent of the Hebrew state's water needs and that Israel does not want "Syria to wet its feet in the waters of Lake Tiberias."

The Syrian information minister said that "the water issue is not a bilateral issue to be discussed in the bilateral negotiations" — which indicates Damascus' refusal to send water experts to the Wye Plantation negotiations being held in Maryland State, even though Israel has sent water and economic experts.

Salman added that the issue "should be discussed in the multilateral negotiations," which Damascus and Beirut continue to boycott because they believe no progress has been made in the bilateral negotiations.

This is the first time Syrian officials have spoken about the water issue, while the Israelis continue to focus on it. Syrian Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar' had stressed that the issue would be resolved in accordance with "international law" and that Syria's water rights "are known."

Salman pointed out that his country "made its participation in the multilaterals conditional on the achievement of fundamental progress in the bilaterals. Syria would participate in the multilaterals when that happens." He added that water in the region concerns "Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Israel. Thus some of them should not continue to talk about the issue as though it is a bilateral issue. It is not a bilateral problem between Syria and Israel. It concerns all the states" concerned in the region.

Israel's withdrawal to the 4 June 1967 lines would mean — according to Damascus' demand — Syria's return to [control of] the shores of the northern half of Lake Tiberias down to a depth of 250 meters, and the return [to Syria] of the sources of Nahr [river] Baniyas, Nahr al-Hasbani, and Nahr al-Dan, and the springs feeding the River Jordan, which runs into Lake Tiberias.

At another level, it is now certain that the Arab League Council will discuss a draft resolution on Turkish water threats to Syria and Iraq at its session to be held on 13 March at foreign minister level.

AL-HAYAH has learned that the draft resolution will invite Turkey to tripartite negotiations over the ideal use of the waters of the Euphrates and Tigris, noninterference with Syria's and Iraq's quotas and interests, and the reduction of the pollution level in the waters released into Syria and Iraqi territory.

Iraq joined Syria yesterday in its demand that the League include a clause on the Turkish threats on the ministerial council's agenda.

An authoritative source in the League has told AL-HAYAH that there is an Arab desire not to escalate the crisis with Turkey and to seek good offices with Ankara with a view to holding a meeting among the foreign ministries in the three countries. The source pointed to the awaited Syrian-Iraqi meeting to be held in Damascus on 10 February at expert level, which will prepare for a meeting between Syrian Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar' and Iraqi Foreign Minister Muhammad Sa'id al-Sahhaf in Cairo on the periphery of the Arab League Council meetings.

Syrian Press: Christopher's Remarks Show U.S. Wants 'Real Peace'

JN2901210396 Damascus SYRIA TIMES in English 27 Jan 96 p 5

[Article by M. Agha: "U.S. Role in Maryland Effective"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] At the end of his 16th shuttle to the Middle East, U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher was very interested to show his optimistic feelings and to express hope that a substantive progress would materialise on the Syrian-Israeli track.

On 19 January 1996, Mr. Christopher stated that full and comprehensive peace will not be complete without concluding an accord on the Syrian track and that the current phase must be completed in order to close the circle of peace.

In a speech on the foreign policy of Washington at Harvard University, Massachusetts Mr. Christopher said that concluding an accord on the Syrian track is the key to close the circle of peace in the region. A review of the statements given by Mr. Christopher following his meeting with President al-Asad or in Tel Aviv after his meetings with Israeli leaders show that the United States, as a major sponsor of the Middle East peace process, is interested in the achievement of real peace between Syria and Israel.

The U.S. Secretary's optimistic remarks are built upon realistic convictions. The two negotiating parties have already moved closer to the discussion of substantive issues following the exploratory talks. The essential issues of Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories as well as security arrangements shall be addressed soon. This is the core of the problem and this makes political observers view the development of peace talks on the Syrian-Israeli track with optimism. The American administration has to push the recent and current Israeli statements on seriousness and readiness to make "just peace" towards their factual translations. The Americans ought to work for making the Israelis take a clear-cut position on full withdrawal from the occupied Golan and South lebanon. In other words, the Israeli officials should stop the game of "musical chairs" and the exchange of the roles of doves and hawks.

Another main aspect of the Maryland exploratory talks is the availability of factors that help talks reach their set objectives on the basis of quitting the complicated conditions that inhabited the negotiations in the recent years.

U.S. peace process coordinator Dennis Ross acknowledged this fact when he stated following the talks that what was achieved in Maryland exceed all what had been done during the past years of peace talks.

"I believe we are crossing a threshold in these talks; but I don't want to lay down the volume of challenges and difficulties lying ahead," Mr. Christopher said during his recent shuttle.

The American sponsorship of and participation in the Maryland talks should be much more effective for bringing about an agreement on the basis of UN resolutions 242, 338, and 425, providing for rull withdrawal from the Golan, South Lebanon and West al-Bika'.

This is no more than what had been agreed upon in 1991 before the launching of the US initiative and holding the Madrid peace conference on October 31, 1991. Syria agreed to take part in the peace process on the basis of these resolutions and the land for peace principle.

On 22 January 1996, the central leadership of the Progressive National Front (PNF) reviewed the latest developments in the region; particularly the peace talks on the Syrian track. The PNF leadership stressed Syria's commitment to the bases of the peace process; foremost of which is a full withdrawal from the Golan to June 4, 1967 lines and from South Lebanon as well as the implementation of the relevant UN resolutions and the principles of international legitimacy.

Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Shim'on Peres acknowledged at a joint press conference with Mr. Christopher that the basic consideration should not be given to speedy paces in achieving peace but "in the right content which must withstand before the test of reality."

On the basis of this acknowledgement, the right contents are not a secret. Following the political developments and changes that have recently taken place, it is clear that further evidence is given on the credibility of Syria's policy and stands towards the peace process.

The Syrian policy has always cared for pushing the peace talks to the shores of safety and stability. Whereas, the Israelis are moving in more than one direction and are adopting zigzag ways to express themselves. Sometimes, they say they are optimistic and they are ready to "pay the full price for full peace" with Syria; and this means; they have the intention to pull their troops out of the occupied territory of Golan and South Lebanon.

While other times they change their stand and say withdrawal must go hand in hand with normalization of relations and talking about economic and water issues!

The Israelis know that withdrawal to the 4 June 1967 line has always been an issue not for negotiation. They also know that Syria will never accept any Israeli position on the Golan under any cover or pretext, namely for security reasons.

What is significant is the maintenance of the spirit of optimism which Peres repeats in his statements about which the Israeli negotiating team talks on all occasions. Peres has recently told a Labour Party meeting that the Party had decided constant efforts to put an end to the state of war in the region.

He also stressed that the US seeks to see the positive results of the Maryland talks between Israel and Syria. Peres has commended Mr. Christopher's big achievements and his chief negotiator Uri Savir criticized the opinions that doubt, the possibility of the success by Mr. Christopher in bringing the peace talks to positive a end.

"Peres does not back those who propagate for disappointment and doubt in Mr. Christoher's efforts," Savir said.

The whole world awaits the results of the current talks in Maryland and hopes that peace and "stability prevail in the Mideast."

Hopes are pinned on the good-offices of U.S. administration to turn the peace process bases into reality and to push the Maryland talks towards its hoped for objectives: the full Israeli pullout of the Golan and agreement on equal and balanced security arrangements.

The way leading to just and comprehensive peace is clear. It starts from complete withdrawal to the 4 June 1967 lines.

Damascus Radio Sees Dim 'Possibility of Success' in Wye Talks

JN2901160396 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1231 GMT 29 Jan 96

[Station commentary]

[FBIS Translated Text] The Syrian and Israeli delegations will meet again in the U.S. state of Maryland to start a fourth round of talks. Hopefully, this round will lead to positive results that will give momentum to the peace process, which seems to be at a standstill so far and has not yet taken the right course to arrive at the aspired goal. We hope the new round of talks will succeed in making the progress which the third round failed to make.

However, we do not pin much hope on the possibility of the success of this round or any upcoming rounds as long as Israel continues to use deception and makes demands that have nothing to do with the crux of the crisis and are in no way part of the foundations or conditions of peace. Peace is the ultimate objective. The path of peace is a straight one. Any deviation from this path will eventually lead to various possibilities. However, peace will under no circumstances be one of these possibilities.

Clearly, following the three rounds of talks, and despite the U.S. participation in and sponsorship of these negotiations, Israel is still deliberately stunting the peace process and mounting obstacles. This behavior unmistakably shows the abrupt contradiction between it on the one hand and Israeli Prime Minister Shim'on Peres' statements on the other. This behavior is in line with Foreign Minister Ehud Baraq's statements before and during the rounds of negotiations — statements which are tantamount to instructions to the Israeli delegation. This gives evidence that what seems to be a contradiction in the positions and policy between the prime minister and his foreign minister is nothing more than a maneuvering tactic. It is quite illogical for this sharp incongruency to exist if it was not agreed upon between the two parties.

We believe the stumbling of the peace process and its clashing with the proposals of the Israeli negotiating delegation lends support to this fact. It goes without saying that it is impossible to accomplish a genuine, just, and comprehensive peace as long as this disparity between the Syrian and Israeli view of peace continues to exist. Syria considers peace one of its strategic goals. It has deep faith in peace as a guarantee for security and safety and a sound atmosphere for coexistence among peoples. It also believes that peace will reassure the peoples, devote their efforts, and employ their energies and resources for their good and that of the generations to come and humanity in its entirety. On the other extreme, Israel views peace as a tactical approach to make gains and serve its goals of expansion or domination — an approach that poses dangers to peace.

There is no doubt that there is a big difference between a position that considers peace a strategic goal worthy of every sacrifice and effort to achieve it and a position that deems peace a tactical approach that may change according to the circumstances and in a manner that serves the constant ambitions.

At any rate, we should wait until the results of the current round unfold. We believe the U.S. endeavor will succeed in persuading Israel to stop messing with the fate of peace. Undoubtedly, the United States possesses many resources whose logic cannot be ignored, Israel must acknowledge this logic.

Syrian Press Criticizes Recent Israeli Statements on Golan

JN2901212196 Damascus AL-THAWRAH in Arabic 28 Jan 96 p 9

[From the "AL-THAWRAH Issues" column by Muhammad 'Ali Buzah: "Syria's Sanctities"]

[FBIS Translated Text] No one could expect the Maryland talks, whose third round concluded on Friday 26 January, to yield more results than it actually did. These results reflected and highlighted the existing difficulties and gaps between the Syrian and Israeli views regarding the security arrangements on both sides of the 4 June 1967 lines.

This is especially true since the Israeli positions, which were expressed in one way or another and which preceded the talks and accompanied them moment by moment, have decided things, obstructed the road, and shown signs and data which make it impossible to assume that the Israeli side came to the talks in good faith and that it is negotiating with a real desire for peace—desire that is in harmony with the resolutions of international legitimacy and the spirit of the U.S. initiative, and that is up to the level of responsibility and to the genuine Syrian commitment toward the bases and elements of such peace.

The wave of optimism has been dissipated by the recent Israeli statements and by Israeli Foreign Minister Ehud Baraq's provocative remarks, whether those made to the Israeli Army's radio or to the conference of the Jewish organization heads in New York regarding peace with Syria. The wave of optimism has also been dissipated by Israel's insistence on setting up the ground early warning stations in the Golan and by Israel's adherence to controlling the water sources in the Golan and every cubic meter that pours into Lake Tiberias.

The recent Israeli statements have also undermined, in advance, the work and results of the Maryland round of talks and have even burdened and besieged this round with extremely intransigent positions. These positions have intensified the atmosphere to such an extent that nobody knows how these talks can be useful and how they can contribute to the peace process and promote the stumbling Syrian track.

Moreover, the recent Israeli statements have fostered the negative impressions casting doubt on the advantage and credibility of the language the Israeli rulers use when talking about peace. They have also given material proof that there has been no change in the mentality governing Israeli decisionmaking and that the Peres government's model is the same as that of Shamir and Rabin who procrastinated and maneuvered for a long time.

Moreover, Shamir and Rabin publicly rejected withdrawal to the 4 June 1967 lines, and used the peace process and talks as a pretext to implement their expansionist ambitions and dreams. Under the aegis of the peace process, they also actually evaded the consequences and requirements of a just and comprehensive peace.

Shamir dared to announce this procrastination and these maneuvers. He declared to the world and to the U.S. sponsor that he deliberately perpetuated the talks for years until the Arab side would become bored and lose its balance, so it would be easy to obtain concessions at the expense of the Arab land and the national and pan-Arab rights.

Despite their apparent flexibility and their sweet talk about peace and about the quest for peace, Shamir's successors — namely, Rabin and later Peres — could not conceal the fact that they followed the same policy and that they never departed from Shamir's position which obstructed the road, deadlocked the peace process, and torpedoed all paths and efforts, including the U.S. initiative, to achieve peace.

The Peres government tried to abort the Maryland talks and complicate them with minor details, marginal matters, reactions, and large labyrinths that circumvent substantive issues and secure Israel's supremacy in the Golan and in peace without paying attention to the U.S. efforts which apparently began to be activated to bring about an achievement and a breakthrough on the Syrian track and later on the Lebanese track. Such a breakthrough will place the region on the threshold of real peace.

If a word is to be said in this regard, the Israeli politicians and rulers should not forget the fact that Syria's rights, full sovereignty over its territory, and the adherence to returning the Golan and southern Lebanon and to withdrawing the occupation forces to the 4 June 1967 lines as well as the need for equitability [al- takafu'], equality [al-musawah], and balance [al-tawazun] in the security arrangements are all indisputable constants and sanctities and are also red lines no one is permitted to cross or undermine.

Syrian Editorial Seeks 'Deeper Understanding' From Israel

JN2901213596 Damascus SYRIA TIMES in English 27 Jan 96 p 5

[Article by Hisham Bukhari; "Deeper Understanding Needed"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Now that the Syrian-Israeli talks were resumed last Thursday in Maryland, USA, yet no surprising results are expected. [as published] Although, the U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher has joined the talks, Israel seems to be hesitant to abide by the UN Security Council Resolutions 242, 338, and 425 which call for a complete Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories. However, the participation of Mr. Christopher in the Syrian-Israeli talks in Maryland mirrors the U.S. strong will to put a happy ending to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Christopher revealed after the meeting that the present talks centered on the security arrangements which will follow an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights. But the question is whether Israel is prepared to accept to give back to Syria the usurped lands of the Golan

Heights. Indicators show that Israel is not yet willing for making a complete pull-back to the borders of 4 June 1967.

A clear evidence on this is the statements of the Israeli officials and leaders. Israeli Foreign Minister Ehud Baraq said last week in Washington that Israel would not be in a hurry to sign an agreement with Syria. Barak added in front of the Jewish Organizations Conference in Washington that Israel would insist on installing early warring stations in the Golan and that the Israeli stand on the final borders with Syria is not yet crystallized.

In fact, such Israeli statements which are declared by the Israeli Foreign Minister confirm that Israel is reluctant to commit itself to the requirements of just and comprehensive peace in accordance with the U.S. peace initiative. Therefore, it is clear that the positive and fruitful atmosphere which prevails at Maryland talks is the result of the American effective role as a full partner to talks. Syria highly appreciated the U.S. constructive role and intensive efforts to push forward the Syrian-Israeli peace talks which are being hampered by Israeli ambiguity and exaggeration on the security arrangements on the borders.

Syria has always been clear and frank. From the very beginning, Syria has voiced her commitment to the U.S. peace initiative and the principle of exchanging land for peace. Syria has on every occasion declared that she is seeking just and comprehensive peace, a peace which would enable the Arabs to regain their lands and rights and lay down the foundations of a new era of peace and stability in the Middle East. However, this requires bigger cooperation and deeper understanding of the peace requirements on the part of Israel.

Syrian Sources Deny Turkish Accusations of Weapon Transfers

JN3001073096 Paris Radio Monte Carlo in Arabic 0600 GMT 30 Jan 96

[Report by Thana' al-Imam in Damascus]

[FBIS Translated Text] Official Syrian sources expressed the hope that the Turkish Government will try to solve outstanding problems with its neighbors through dialogue based on good neighborliness.

Responding to recent Turkish accusations that Syria brought weapons to Kurdistan Workers Party camps and that the Turkish authorities seized six trucks carrying weapons which Turkey said were bound for Syria, the Syrian sources said: We understand that the internal Turkish situation is unstable, and we are aware that the contradictions within the Turkish political parties prompt some party officials to hold neighboring states responsible for what is happening in Turkey. The sources said that the Turkish accusations against Syria regarding the six trucks are false.

Afghanistan

Taleban Denies Concurrence With Coordination Council

LD2701142296 Tehran IRNA in English 1406 GMT 27 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kabul, Jan. 27, IRNA — The Taleban again denied that it has reached any agreement with the Coordination Council on the formation of a politico-military coalition against the government of Afghan President Borhanoddin Rabbani.

No other agreement has been reached with other opposition groups to overthrow the Kabul government and the Taleban is intent on pursuing its goal of disarming all groups, reported the 'SHARIAT' weekly of the Taleban, quoting a spokesman of the group in its latest issue.

The Taleban and the council held lengthy talks over the past five months, both inside and outside Afghanistan, including Islamabad. Each time, the group denied the council's claims on reaching a final accord.

Meanwhile, Afghan Government officials claimed Friday that intensification of the siege on Kabul, as well as the closure of the Torkham border and the Kabul-Jalalabad highway, were carried out as a result of an agreement between the council and the Taleban during their recent meeting in Islamabad.

Radio Payam-e Azadi of the Islamic Party of Golboddin Hekmatyar, also criticized the statements of a Taleban spokesman rejecting agreement between the two sides.

Reminding that this was not the first time the group issued its denials, the broadcast asserted that explicit agreements were reached between the group and the council.

The Islamic Party, a member of the Coordination Council, said that the only way to force Rabbani to step down was to create a front of opposition groups.

Acting Afghani Foreign Minister Criticizes U.S. Policy Against Iran

LD2601131096 Tehran IRNA in English 1255 GMT 26 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kabul, Jan. 26, IRNA — The caretaker minister of Afghan foreign affairs, Dr. Najibollah Lagharaee, told IRNA here Friday that international forum and humanitarian organization should show reaction against the US perpetrated conspiracy against Iran.

The interim foreign minister pointed out that the interfering foreign elements have inflicted Afghanistan innumerable severe wounds and consequently Afghanistan is against any meddling of outsiders in the domestic affairs of other countries.

Lagharaee critically condemned the United States for its nefarious policy of allocating a twenty million dollar budget for initiating subversive operation against the sovereignty of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

He demanded that serious measures be taken by international forums and humanitarian organizations to immediately halt such unlawful operations.

The caretaker foreign minister underlined that his country was looking forward to close relations with all Islamic countries, specifically the Islamic neighboring countries who are in the priority.

Lagharaee then indicated that it wanted to improve its relations with Pakistan based on mutual respect and noninterference in the domestic affairs of each other.

He further added that Islamabad also has shown interest in promoting its relations with Kabul, adding that Afghanistan is ready to create a suitable environment for the reopening of the Pakistani embassy in the capital city.

The interim foreign minister expressed deep regret of the incident at the embassy which claimed several lives and he sincerely sympathized with the families of the victims.

He went on to say that the government was ready to cooperate with Pakistan in the reconstruction of the embassy premises and provide a suitable area where diplomatic activities could be resumed.

Lagharaee also stated that Pakistan's support for the intensification of the siege of Kabul and an establishment of Pakistani bank and special markets in Qandahar were some acts of interference in the domestic affairs of the country.

The caretaker foreign minister finally concluded that Central Asian republics have asked the opponent groups of the northern region to reconcile with the Afghan Government, which shows the goodwill of those countries.

Hekmatyar Spokesman in Afghanistan Says West Trying To Defame Islam

LD2701212896 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Pashto 1230 GMT 27 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Dear listeners; May we draw your attention to an interview with Qariborrahman Sa'ed, one of the Hezb-e Eslami's [Islamic Party] leaders on the situation in Afghanistan:

We have asked him this question: You have said that the Americans and colonial powers intend to defame the Islamic parties in Afghanistan and you have also said that Mahmoud Mestiri has not followed your formula. Can you tell us, does Mahmoud Mestiri have a plan of his own?

[Begin Sa'ed recording] I have said that his plan follows the Western imperialist line of trying to prevent the idea that a new phase has been entered by the Afghan nation following the collapse of the communist system from reaching the Central Asian deprived countries who have now gained some sort of independence.

Moreover, Islam is now a threat to the Western world. They have said many times that Islam is now a danger to them. For this purpose, and in order to defame the phrase jihad, they have unfortunately instigated internecine conflict among the various Islamic formations in Afghanistan.

This program is not an accidental one and they have invested heavily in this program during the jihad period. All their efforts were directed towards intensifying the fighting among the Islamic groups in Afghanistan, in order to defame the Islamic movement. [passage omitted]

The UN delegation was also trying to carry out useless activities, as part of efforts to find peace, in order to deceive the people and to keep their minds occupied. They want to prevent the Afghan nation from finding the opportunity to work out a system for themselves and want to keep them dependent on other people. One of Mahmoud Mestiri's objectives is to keep the nation believing in false hopes, to keep them busy, to defame the Islamic movements' leaders, to damage Islam and the jehad, and thus enable the West to reach their final objectives in Afghanistan. Efforts are also being undertaken to damage the current geographical map with the aim of causing the break-up of Afghanistan. However, God willing, the Hezb-e Eslami, together with the component formations of the High Coordination Council [HCC]: Jonbesh-e Melli [National Movement], Hezb-e Wahdat-e Eslami [Islamic Unity Party] and Jabha-ye Nejat-e Meli [National Liberation Front] have all decided to save Afghanistan from disintegration. For this purpose the HCC has been formed and various formations representing various tribes are taking part in the HCC and they have prevented this disintegration. We regard Mestiri's mission as an absolute failure and say that the enemy, God willing, will not be able to destroy the present structure of the Afghan nation. Mahmoud Mestiri's work is up to him, but the Afghan nation knows what to do. [end recording]

Afghani Envoy to Iran Urges International Condemnation of Taleban

LD2801101696 Tehran IRNA in English 0857 GMT 28 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Jan. 28, IRNA — The Afghan ambassador to Tehran, Seyyed Mohammad Kheyrkhah, in an interview with the Persian daily 'IRAN' on Saturday urged the international circles and the Islamic countries to condemn the continued carnage of Kabul civilians due to shelling by the Taleban.

He said that the Afghan Government announced a unilateral cease-fire at the threshold of the Muslim holy fasting month of Ramadan, but the Taleban, positioned around Kabul, are still firing missiles and shells at the civilian residential areas.

Referring to the plight of the people living in Kabul, who are suffering from a shortage of fuel, foodstuff and medicine, due to the linking roads being blocked, he said that his government, in view of its peace overtures, expects the international circles to take a clear stand on the moves seeking to continue war and bloodshed.

Expressing his view on the recent request by Kabul and Islamabad calling on Iran to mediate between the two countries, Kheyrkhah said that the Afghan Government's strategy in foreign policy is based on peace, but Pakistan has unfortunately not adopted an unswerving and independent policy since the establishment of an Islamic government in Afghanistan.

"Afghanistan is set to have good relations with Pakistan, and it is up to Islamabad to reconsider its attitude toward Afghan Government and people," he stressed.

The Afghan ambassador added that his government welcomes Iran's recent effort at converging the two factions of Hezb-e Wahdat-e Eslami (Islamic Unity Party), regarding it as a positive step toward establishing security and peace in Afghanistan and resolving its problems.

Underlining the fact that the Afghan Government supports impartial efforts aimed at bringing about a cease-fire and establishing peace in Afghanistan, Kheyrkhah noted that the present fighting in his country has been imposed on the Afghan Government.

"Presently, Taleban's insistence on continuing the war and the inflexibility in their political attitude are the major barriers to establishing peace in Afghanistan," the ambassador concluded.

Afghani Deputy Foreign Minister Meets With Chinese Counterpart

LD2801154696 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Dari 1430 GMT 28 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The esteemed Abdorrahim Ghafurzai, deputy foreign minister, recently arrived in Beijing, the capital of the People's Republic of China, as the head of a high-ranking state delegation. BAKHTAR reports that the Afghan deputy foreign minister spoke with the deputy foreign minister of the People's Republic of China about the expansion of traditional friendly relations between the people of the two countries and gave information to the latter on events in Afghanistan and the peace process. In response, insisting on the cessation of foreign interference in Afghan affairs, the Chinese deputy foreign minister touched on the need for talks and intra-Afghan understanding to achieve lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Captive Russian Pilots in Afghanistan Reportedly on Hunger Strike

LD2901125996 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 1250 GMT 29 Jan 96

[By Oleg Kuzmin]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] TEHRAN, Jan 29 (Itar-Tass) — Some Russian pilots detained by the Afghan Taleban movement in Kandahar went on a hunger strike. According to reports coming in here, this was confirmed by Taleban representatives in Pakistan on Monday.

However, according to these representatives, "the movement leadership does not intend to free hostages under the pressure of this kind." These representatives added that the Taleban leaders intend to release the pilots "only if Russia meets the demands of the movement".

The crew of a Russian Il-76 transport plane which carried ammunition from Albania to Kabul, have been kept hostage by Taleban supporters for nearly six months. All efforts taken by Moscow to free them, failed.

One of the crew members had already gone on a hunger strike in the past but had stopped it after receiving assurances from Russia of an earlier release.

Kabul Daily Asks Pakistan To Return 12 Fighter Planes

LD2901194996 Tehran IRNA in English 1920 GMT 29 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kabul, Jan. 29, IRNA — A Kabul daily today called upon Islambabad to return the 12 Afghan jet-fighters that landed at Pakistan's airports, during the struggle against the Soviet-installed regime.

According to the daily 'DARIZ', the aircraft which include four MiG-21, three [passage indistinct] were flown to Peshawar, Miranshah, Parachenar, Kohat, Dalindi and Sumengi airports in Pakistan between the years 1981-1990, by pilots defecting from the then communist regime of Kabul.

"Although it has become a habit of the Pakistani government to loot properties of the Afghan people, according to international laws Islamabad is duty-bound to return the aircraft to [word indistinct]," the daily wrote.

It also accused Pakistan especially its army intelligence service of siphoning off 60 percent of the international aid meant for the Afghan mojahedin and immigrants immigrants during the anti-communist struggle, and using it for beefing its own military and giving part of it to pro-Pakistani Afghan groups.

Kabul Radio Reports 'Internecine Differences' in Taleban

LD2701204096 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Pashto 1530 GMT 27 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Internecine differences among the Taleban are increasing. Reports reaching BAKHTAR from Ghazni Province say that recently a Taleban arms dump in Moqor district, Ghazni Province, exploded as a result of their internecine differences.

Kabul Radio Reports Resumption of Taleban Bombardment

LD2901164296 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Dari 1600 GMT 29 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] A Taleban jet plane bombed Kabul this afternoon. A BAKHTAR correspondent reports from the scene of the incident that at about 1545 this afternoon a Taleban MiG plane dropped three bombs on residential areas of the city. They caused no loss of life. After one and a half months' lull, the Taleban have resumed their bombardment of the city. They also fired eight rockets on the city today, after some quiet days, as a result of which one person was martyred and three others were injured.

The bombardment is taking place [words indistinct] and the ground has been prepared for the arrival of food convoys in Kabul. The Taleban are perpetrating these acts at a time when the people are observing the month of Ramadan and suffering much hardship as a result of the road blockades by the opposition, especially the Taleban, who are thereby revealing their inhumane and un-Islamic face. By acts such as these, not only does this group ignore the peace-seeking efforts of the Islamic state, but it also ignores the pain of millions of Kabul residents [as heard].

Goverment Denies Closure of Kabul-Kandahar Road

LD2801172596 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Pashto 1530 GMT 28 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The Kabul-Kandahar highway through Maydanshar is open to traffic. A responsible security source told BAKHTAR that traffic had not used the highway for some time despite the fact that the Islamic state forces had not blocked the highway. Now it is open to traffic. All motor vehicles can freely move along the highway. The source said: It was alleged in the past that the government forces had closed the highway, though the security sources said that government forces had not blocked the road. Once again we report that the Kabul-Kandahar highway via Maydanshar is open and that government forces have not blocked the road.

Hezb-e Eslami Reopens Kabul-Jalalabad Highway

LD2901181196 (Clandestine) Radio Message of Freedom in Pashto to Afghanistan 0230 GMT 29 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Yesterday the foodstuffs continued to reach Kabul from Jalalabad. Kabul-Jalalabad highway, which is the supply route to Kabul, has been reopened after being closed for two weeks. Also yesterday, a convoy of food and fuel left for Kabul. Hezb-e Eslami forces, which control the Kabul-Jalalabad highway, reopened the highway on humanitarian grounds and to meet the needs of the people in Kabul.

It will be seen now whether Rabbani, as in the past, exploits Hezb-e Eslami's gesture of goodwill or prepares the ground for the formation of an interim government by stepping down.

Hundreds of People Killed Over Past Two Months in Kabul

LD2901184996 (Clandestine) Radio Message of Freedom in Pashto to Afghanistan 0230 GMT 29 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Dozens of the defenseless people of Kabul have been killed by the Shura-e Nezar gunmen over the past two months. A Radio Message of Freedom correspondent in the city reports that over the past two months 300 people have been killed in Khayrkhana district and 120 others have been killed in ward five. The report adds most of the killing has been perpetrated by the Shura-e Nezar gunmen for money. So far the Kabul administration leaders have taken no action against the killings. According to reports, Haji Abdol Qadir, a carpet merchant, was followed by Sardar Panjshiri's men and killed next to his house along with his two sons. They were reportedly carrying home money from their shop.

India

India Warns Pakistan Not To Escalate Tension in Jammu, Kashmir

BK3001044096 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0245 GMT 30 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] India has warned Pakistan not to escalate tension in the border area in Jammu and Kashmir. The external affairs minister at the end of his four-day visit to Nepal said in Katmandu that the offensive launched from the other side of the border should be stopped. Mr. Pranab Mukherjee was responding to questions by media persons about recent unprovoked firing by Pakistani Rangers in border areas of Jammu.

The minister said India has already expressed its serious concern over U.S. approval of the Brown Amendment to supply military hardware worth $368 million to Pakistan. Mr. Mukherjee said, India will have to gear up to meet the enhanced threat perception from Pakistan because of Islamabad's increased striking power.

In Jammu and Kashmir, the Pakistani troops resorted to unusual heavy firing last night on eight Indian border villages in (Chikannek) area. A civilian of village Mahanta was killed in the firing. Other villages which came under firing are Jamunbela, Brahmanbela, Chak Phagwari, (Deuwa), Nikowal, Maljoda, and Raipura. A BSF [Border Security Force] spokesman told our Jammu correspondent that Pakistani troops were using medium machine guns. In the adjoining Samba sector, BSF foiled a major infiltration bid from Pakistan. Four intruders were killed while others managed to escape into Pakistani territory.

India: Talks Held With Pakistani Officers To Defuse Border Tension

BK3001112796 Hong Kong AFP in English 1109 GMT 30 Jan 96

[By Ashwani Kumar]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] JAMMU, India, Jan 30 (AFP) — Indian and Pakistani military officers met on Tuesday to try to defuse the volatile situation on the Kashmir border, where troops of the two countries have been exchanging heavy automatic weapons fire.

Indian military officers protested during the so-called "flag meeting" at an undisclosed border post against firing by Pakistani soldiers on border villages and Indian pickets, an officer in India's Border Security Force (BSF) said.

The Indian officers also accused the Pakistani military of opening fire on Indian positions to provide covering fire to Muslim militants trying to sneak across the border into Indian Kashmir, torn by a Muslim separatist insurgency.

Further details from the meeting between sector commanders of the two sides were not immediately available.

BSF deputy inspector-general K.S. Vohra said an Indian civilian was killed by Pakistani fire overnight in the border village of Manta Dian Palla in the Akhnoor sector northwest of this winter capital of Indian Kashmir.

The villager was the first civilian killed since Pakistani and Indian troops began exchanging heavy machine gun fire following a rocket attack on a mosque in Pakistani-held Kashmir on Friday which left 20 worshippers dead.

India and Pakistan have accused the other of carrying out the rocket strike, which raised tensions between the two nuclear-capable countries and sparked a surge in firing incidents along the border.

Vohra said four Muslim militants had been killed by Indian troops in the R. S. Pura sector overnight while trying to cross into Indian Kashmir. Previous reports had identified the four as civilians.

Pakatani defense ministry officials Tuesday denied there were any Pakistani casualties, terming the shooting "routine" skirmishes.

"There is no unusual increase in firing" between Indian and Pakistani forces along the border, an official in Islamabad said, adding that skirmishes between the two sides were a "routine" occurrence and the border situation was "normal."

"We have no report of any Pakistani casualties," the defense ministry official here said, adding he was unaware of any Indian casualties.

India accuses Pakistan of arming and training Muslim militants seeking to end Indian rule in the divided Himalayan territory. Pakistan denies the charge.

Vohra also said elderly people and children had moved out of 12 villages in the so-called Chicken Neck area, where the firing from Pakistani positions has been particularly heavy.

The BSF officer said his paramilitary force had strengthened its positions along the border to prevent Muslim militants from sneaking into Indian Kashmir to carry out attacks on the security forces.

Vohra said that small arms fire from the Pakistani side continued throughout the day. Indian defense sources said Pakistani Rangers had fired some 32,000 rounds at Indian positions during the night.

Indian officials said meanwhile that K.V. Krishna Rao, the governor of Indian Kashmir and a former army general, met with army and BSF officers late Monday to discuss the border situation.

He urged them to take measures to defuse the tension and restore confidence among the villagers living along the frontier, many of whom have been advised to leave until the skirmishing dies down, they said.

The Pakistani defense ministry spokesman in Islamabad said the army had issued no instructions to civilians to vacate border villages. "The situation is not that serious," he added.

"The Indians are apparently playing up the situation with what motives we don't know," he said.

In another development, India's insurgency-hit Kashmir Valley was crippled on Tuesday by a strike called by Kashmiri Muslim militant groups to mourn the deaths of the 20 Muslim worshippers in the rocket strike.

Shops, offices, banks and schools were closed in Srinagar, the summer capital of Indian Kashmir, and other towns in the Kashmir Valley and traffic was off the roads, residents said.

In Washington, State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said the United States was encouraged by a statement by Pakistani President Farooq Ahmad Leghari who said he did not believe the skirmishing would lead to war.

"We call upon both India and Pakistan to show restraint," he added.

Indian and Pakistani troops exchange fire on a near-daily basis along the Line of Control in Kashmir, and India accused Pakistan of firing on Indian positions on some 3,000 separate occasions last year.

India and Pakistan have fought three wars since independence in 1947, two of them over Kashmir. India controls two-thirds of the Himalayan territory while Pakistan controls the rest.

Kashmiris Observe 'Black Day' To Protest 'Indian Brutalities'

BK2601154096 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in English 1400 GMT 26 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kashmiris are observing the Indian Republic Day today as Black Day to protest against Indian brutalities in occupied Kashmir. According to reports from both sides of the Line of Control, a number of protest demonstrations and rallies are being held against the massive killings of innocent Kashmiris who are demanding their right of self-determination. In occupied Kashmir, there was a complete strike today. Black flags were hoisted at house tops and other vantage points. Normal life remained totally suspended and cities and towns gave deserted look. The Indian troops patrolled in streets and bazaars throughout the day.

In Srinagar, a rocket was seized from a nearby hospital minutes before the Republic Day parade was to begin. The Indian forces arrested many people in this connection. All India Radio claims that the rocket was to be used by freedom fighters to disrupt the Republic Day function. Protest rallies were held after Juma [Friday] congregations at various places in the valley and Muslim majority areas of Jammu region, at which the brutalities of Indian troops were strongly denounced.

The All Parties Hurriyyat Conference [APHC] has described the Black Day as a referendum in favor of liberation from illegal Indian occupation. The APHC in a statement has appealed to the United Nations and all the international humanitarian organizations to take notice of the genocidal Indian military operations in occupied Kashmir and exert all pressure on India to withdraw its troops and let the Kashmiris decided their future in accordance with the UN mandated plebiscite. The chairman, All Parties Hurriyyat Conference, Mir Waiz Omar Farooq, in a message on this occasion has said Indian Republic Day is a Black Day for us and any day celebrated by Indians is day of mourning for the people of Kashmir.

On the occasion of Black Day, a protest meeting was held in Muzaffarabad today. Prominent Kashmiri leaders condemned the Indian brutalities and reiterated their pledge to continue the struggle of Kashmiris for their right to self-determination. Later, they marched to the UN Observer Mission and handed over a protest memorandum to the mission calling upon the world body to fulfill its commitment with Kashmiri people.

In Islamabad, leaders of the All Parties Hurriyyat Conference, Azad Jammu and Kashmir branch, today visited the Indian High Commission and presented a memorandum calling for release of all detainees immediately and sending a fact-finding mission to occupied valley to assess the human rights violations.

Indian Indigenous Surface-to-Air Missile Slated for Trials in Mar

BK2801114696 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0830 GMT 28 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The indigenously-developed land-to-air missile system Trishul is likely to be ready for user trials by the Army this March. The missile, being developed by the DRDO [Defense Research and Development Organization] as part of the integrated guided missile development program, can bring down low-flying enemy aircraft up to a range of 9 km. DRDO sources told our correspondent that the system is primarily aimed at meeting the low level air defense needs of the Army. The trials carried out by the DRDO have been successful and problems relating to the guidance system of the missile have been overcome. The missile homes on to its airborne target by radar guidance. Since the missile can be launched within six to eight seconds after detection of the enemy target, it is expected to be successful against even enemy missiles. At present, Russian-built missiles are used by the Indian Army for defending its forces against air attacks.

Indian Paper: U.S. 'Pressures' on Nuclear Policy Viewed

BK3001114396 Madras THE HINDU in English 28 Jan 96 p 9

[Article by C. Raja Mohan: "The 'Bully' and His Option"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The end game on shaping India's nuclear policy appears to have begun. The Indian Government is in the throes of a major debate on its nuclear options in the changed international context. The outcome of this debate could have a lasting effect not only on India's nuclear posture but also on the global arms control regimes and the Asian balance of power.

The U.S. is determined to discourage India from emerging as the sixth declared nuclear weapon power in the international system; and the Clinton Administration must be expected to use all available means to it to prevent such an outcome.

In the last few days, the tension between the Indian nuclear debate and the American pressures on it has come into public view on three different fronts. At the talks in Geneva on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty [CTBT], Washington and New Delhi outlined their clashing perceptions on global arms control. The American media have been putting out accounts of how the threat of sanctions by the Clinton Administration has forced India to retreat from a planned nuclear test in the Rajasthan desert.

As India announced another test of its short range missile Prithvi, the spokesmen of the U.S. State and Defence Departments cautioned India against deploying the missile.

Clearly the nuclear dispute between, Washington and New Delhi that has simmered for nearly half a decade is coming to a head. Ever since the end of the Cold War the U.S., as part of its new emphasis on non-proliferation, has been putting relentless pressure on India to freeze its nuclear capabilities and desist from development and deployment of its missiles. Its declared objective, repeatedly reiterated, has been to "cap, reduce over a period of time, and eventually eliminate" the nuclear and missile capabilities of India.

With a view to achieving this objective the Clinton Administration has sought to impose a variety of bilateral, regional and global mechanisms to constrain India's nuclear policy. Not content with its own direct initiatives, the Clinton Administration had mobilised other advanced nations including Japan to pressure India by issuing demarches and other diplomatic communications.

The U.S. has also been putting pressure on Russia to limit its civilian space and nuclear cooperation with India. Within the region, Pakistan, as always has been willing to play the American game on arms control by putting across its own proposals for a nuclear weapon free zone as well as a zero-missile zone for South Asia.

Confronted with this unremitting pressure from the West, the Indian Government under the leadership of Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao has ducked, dodged, and deflected the various American non- proliferation initiatives over the last five years. There have been occasional mishaps and 'self-goals' in the implementation of India's nuclear diplomatic interaction with the West.

This was not entirely surprising, given the weak hand with which India was forced to conduct its nuclear diplomacy in the early 1990s. The severe economic difficulties faced by India at the turn of the decade, the focus on the Kashmir question, the series of domestic crises confronted by the Government, and doubts about its political stability have all been factors that made it hard for New Delhi to articulate an assertive policy on nuclear and missile issues. Nevertheless, the Indian Government may have barely managed to defend the core elements of Indian nuclear policy, namely opposition to discriminatory global arms control regimes and keeping its nuclear weapon option alive.

Standing still and refusing to cede ground on the nuclear issue were no mean achievements for a government that was internally weak and externally under intense pressure. Yet over the last one year, it has begun to dawn on the Government that defending the traditional nuclear policy may not be adequate in protecting India's national interest.

The change in the global and regional nuclear dynamics and the assessment of the emerging international order were beginning to force the Indian Government to rethink its nuclear policy.

A series of developments in 1995 forced India to reconsider its approach to the nuclear question. The unconditional and indefinite extension of the NPT in the summer of 1995 without any commitments from the nuclear weapon states to rid the world of atomic arsenals drilled home one basic point: Nuclear weapons are here to stay for a long, long time to come. Notwithstanding India's commitment to disarmament, the Indian nuclear policy will have to be based on this reality.

Even as they extolled the virtues of nonproliferation to others, the five nuclear weapon States were making it quite clear that nuclear weapons are useful instruments of policy for themselves. At least four of them — the U.S., Russia, Britain and France — formally reiterated at the end of a prolonged debate within their own countries that nuclear deterrence remains the supreme doctrine of national defence.

In India's immediate neighbourhood, the U.S. — in pursuit of its geopolitical objectives in the Gulf, Central and South West Asia — seems prepared to legitimise the nuclear weapons of Pakistan. By pushing the Brown Amendment to the American nonproliferation law, the U.S. has declared its intent to resume arms supplies to Pakistan.

For New Delhi it was becoming evident that in the post-Cold War era, it will have to rely on its own means to defend its security interests in an uncertain environment. The hopes of the early 1990s that India could build a productive political and security relationship with the U.S. have begun to vanish. The Indo-U.S. commercial relationship that has blossomed has not been strong enough to dilute the American activism on Kashmir and its determination to revive a strategic consensus with Pakistan. Given the absence of any possibility of a special relationship with Moscow or any other great power in the post-Cold War period, India has no alternative but to look within itself for the defence of its vital interests.

For the emerging powers of the international system in the current context, the strategy of self-help translates into acquiring a credible national nuclear deterrent. It is against this backdrop that the current Indian debate on its nuclear options has begun. The key question for India has been whether its well advertised (but not deployed) capabilities in the nuclear and missile field are good enough to serve as a credible deterrent.

One view is that the traditional Indian policy of keeping its option open without actually exercising it is adequate enough to meet India's security needs. A second view suggests that India's ambiguous deterrent is not credible and that India must move towards a full fledged development of a nuclear deterrent that includes testing of nuclear weapons and stepping up the pace of its missile development and deployment, in particular a convincing medium range missile capability.

It argues that if India does not exercise its nuclear weapon option now, the international arms control and non-proliferation regimes being erected by the U.S. will constrain and eventually undermine and roll back India's nuclear weapon option.

A third school supports the call for accelerated missile development to make India's delivery capability effective, but suggests New Delhi may not need to test its nuclear weapons to make its deterrent posture credible. It calls for a nuclear declaratory posture that will signal the deployment of India's deterrent capabilities without provoking the U.S. and the West into punitive action.

The U.S. has sought to intervene in this debate by raising the spectre of sanctions under its non-proliferation law called the Glenn Amendment if India were to conduct a nuclear test. By putting out stories in the American media that the threat of American sanctions has pushed the Indian nuclear genie back into the bottle, the Clinton Administration hopes to intimidate the Indian decision-makers and steer it in a direction convenient for itself.

India needs to be prudent in assessing all the possible consequences of its actions on the nuclear front. But in the end India's decision on the nuclear option must be based on its security needs and a judgment on its ability to manage the international consequences. It cannot be a decision based on the fear or American sanctions.

As India reviews the future of its nuclear course, the debate has got enmeshed in the, question of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty that is being negotiated at the multilateral Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. India that has long supported the CTBT — that will end nuclear weapon testing worldwide — as a first step towards the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons. But to its chagrin, India now finds that the American enthusiasm for the Treaty stems from its utility as a non-proliferation measure that will cap the nuclear capabilities of threshold countries but will allow the big powers to keep their atomic arsenals in trim.

At the CTBT talks in Geneva last week, India and the U.S. confronted each other with diametrically opposed positions. India demanded that the CTBT be linked to a time bound framework for the elimination of nuclear weapons, while the U.S. rejected such a linkage. There is some nonaligned support right now for the Indian argument. But it remains to be seen how much of it will remain once the American steam roller begins to push various countries to line up behind the American position on the treaty. In essence, the CTBT has become an argument between India and the U.S.

The coming weeks may see an intensification of American pressure on India in relation to the CTBT as well as the future of Indian nuclear option. Both the countries have a lot at stake: the future of the nonproliferation regime for the U.S.; and the credibility of its nuclear deterrent posture for India. Until now the Prime Minister Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao, has withstood most of the American non-proliferation pressures. But the big test is yet to come.

Indian Commentary Assails U.S. Enactment of Brown Amendment

BK2801083396 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0245 GMT 28 Jan 96

[Commentary by K. Subrahmanyam]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The one-time waiver of the Pressler law prohibiting U.S. arms aid and transfers to Pakistan in the absence of presidential certification that Pakistan did not possess nuclear weapons or explosive devices — known as the Brown Amendment — has been signed into law by President Clinton. It will result in the release of some $368 million of military equipment, excluding the F- 16 combat aircraft for which Pakistan had also contracted. It includes three P-3C Orion maritime reconnaissance and strike aircraft, ammunition, spares, and assorted equipment.

The concern in India is not about this consignment of arms itself, but what this waiver of their own law by the U.S. indicates. The U.S. is prepared to extend this one-time waiver though no certification on Pakistan not having nuclear weapons is possible. The U.S. commitment in nonproliferation is subordinated to other policy considerations it may have. In the 80's, such an approach led to Pakistan being extended large-scale military aid on condition that it would not reach nuclear weapon capability and at the same time the U.S. looking away as Pakistan went ahead and produced nuclear weapons. Such an approach cannot be ruled out in the future either. There must be very weighty reasons to persuade the U.S. Administration and Congress to give this one-time waiver, especially in the light of the fact that in the last three years, six CIA operatives have been killed by Pakistanis. In the past, the U.S. bombed Libya as punishment for its alleged complicity for a bombing in a Berlin discotheque which resulted in the death of one U.S. serviceman.

What worries India is the possible hidden agenda of the U.S. which compelled it to overlook Pakistan's nuclear transgression and the killing of CIA operatives. It would be clear that the hidden agenda is in all probably related to Pakistan acting as a frontline state in the U.S. policy of containment of Iran. The Pakistani prime minister had repeatedly offered her services during her visit to the United States as a frontline state against extremism, an obvious reference to Iran. In the past, by offering their services in the U.S. containment policy of the Soviet Union, Pakistan obtained a lot of military equipment. It never deployed a single soldier against the Soviet Union, but used the military equipment obtained from the U.S. against India. One-time waiver in 1969 by the Nixon administration emboldened Pakistan to launch on the adventurism in East Bengal in 1971, which led to a war.

Indian Janata Dal President Resigns Over Money Scandal

BK2901092396 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0830 GMT 29 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Bihar chief minister, Mr. Lalu Prasad Yadav, is the new president of the Janata Dal. His unanimous election was made at the party's Political Affairs Committee [PAC] in New Delhi today. Earlier, Mr. S.R. Bommai announced that he is stepping down from the party post. The PAC last night in its meeting had suggested that Mr. Bommai should resign as the Janata Dal president in view of his name figuring in the list of recipients of money in the hawala [illegal money transfer] case. Mr. Bommai clarified that he is resigning to clear any doubt about his involvement in the hawala scandal. He said he will continue to serve the party as a loyal soldier.

Mr. Lalu Prasad Yadav said that he has taken the responsibility of heading the party when there are many challenges. He said the party will now try to further strengthen the third front in view of the coming general elections.

The Central Bureau of Investigation [CBI] today told the designated court of the special judge, Mr. B.B. Gupta, that it will file additional documents in the hawala case after getting permission from the Supreme Court. Moving an application seeking 15 day's time, the CBI said the additional documents have been sealed under the director of the apex court, as a related case was going on there. Sources said Mr. B.B. Gupta has allowed time to the CBI for filing of additional documents after which the trial of the case will begin. The case is likely to come up for hearing on the 15th of next month and the CBI has accordingly been directed to file the documents by that time.

Iran

Tehran Radio Commentary Views Syrian-Israeli Talks

LD2701151296 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in English 1130 GMT 27 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The U.S. State Department announced on Friday January 26 that the Syria-Zionist regime talks had ended inconclusively. According to AFP the talks are scheduled to resume next Monday in the U.S. state of Maryland. Political observers believe that the announcement of the fact by the U.S. State Department Spokesman Nicholas Burns, that there is a wide gap between the positions of the two sides, clearly indicates that there has been no tangible progress in the negotiations so far.

A short look at the widespread propaganda launched after the resumption of the talks following a six-month interruption demonstrates the baselessness of these propaganda campaigns by the United States. In spite of the Zionist regime's eagerness to obtain a quick agreement with Syria and play it as a trump card in the upcoming elections in occupied Palestine, it seems that the handover of the Golan Heights is a painful issue in front of that usurper regime. Likewise, Syria cannot sign any agreement with the Zionists without first getting back the Golan. Therefore the last two rounds of talks and next Monday's negotiations will be fruitless if the fate of the Golan is not quickly determined in the near future in discussions.

Informed sources believe the Zionist regime has adopted a policy of continuing talks and dragging its feet at the same time through political bargaining in order to wring maximum concessions from Syria while itself giving up the least concessions possible.

On the other side of the talks, Damascus has predetermined its policy of liberating the Golan and is ready to continue the talks only so far as it deems possible the achieving of this goal through these negotiations. Undoubtedly Syria is not willing to continue indefinitely such inconclusive negotiations because entering direct negotiations with the Zionist regime it has damaged extensively its political position among the Islamic countries. So, if the policy of continuing negotiations is just going to wind up discrediting the Syrian foreign policy in the face of Zionist regime's tactics, it seems unlikely that Syria will go on with its current policy of holding discussions for ever.

The announcement that Christopher is once more going to travel to the Middle East on February 1 demonstrates the fact that the United States itself is also confessing the fact that long and aimless negotiations cannot continue indefinitely. However, it is not certain that Christopher's upcoming trip can lead to a breakthrough in the trend of the capitulation talks. Under the current and highly sensitive conditions the Syrian Government is going through a fateful task which will certainly affect its future position in the region.

Tehran Radio Commentary Protests Israeli Military Presence in Red Sea

LD2701164596 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 1005 GMT 27 Jan 96

[Unattributed commentary]

[FBIS Translated Text] According to existing evidence, relations between Yemen and Eritrea have worsened in the past few days. The clearest sign in this regard is a request by Eritrea which stresses the withdrawal of the Yemeni ambassador from its capital. Meanwhile, ongoing diplomatic efforts to get Eritrean forces out of the Greater Hanish Island [name as received] have failed and no date has been set either for bilateral talks between Eritrea and Yemen.

Some African Arabic media considers Eritrea's insistence to continue its occupation of the Greater Hanish Island to be outside the potential capabilities of this newly founded state. That is why they relate the worsening relations between Yemen and Eritrea to colonialist provocations and even interventions.

Of course, in these developments the Sanaa statesmen have shown restraint and, bearing in mind international conditions and laws, they have stressed the need for bilateral talks and avoiding the use of force. But according to the Arab media, not only have the Eritrean authorities failed to give a clear response to the peaceful requests by Yemen but, by involving Israeli experts and military advisers in the occupation of the Greater Hanish Island, they have also provoked the Arab world's sentiments and public opinion.

It is clear that the presence of the Israeli military experts in Eritrea and, on the other hand, the occupation of some Arab lands are dangerous moves which can once again maximize the anti-Zionist protests in the Middle East. Although Tel Aviv officials are not directly seeking sovereignty over the most strategically sensitive areas of the Middle East, the continuation of their support for the occupation of the Greater Hanish Island demonstrates the implementation of the Zionist expansionist and aggressive plots. In fact, the Tel Aviv government is thinking of controlling a strait which not only threatens the Middle Eastern trade and economy but also presents the Arab governments with numerous difficulties in continuing their political-military affairs.

Obviously the public opinion in the Arab world, affected by the occupation of vast areas of Syria and Lebanon by Israeli forces, is now facing a new problem, namely Zionist aggression in the Red Sea. That is why it considers the peace-seeking slogans of the past two years as a cover for Israel's dominance over that sea.

Iranian Official Expects No Adverse Effect From Iraqi Return to Oil Market

LD2901162296 Tehran IRNA in English 1549 GMT 29 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Jan. 29, IRNA — The member of the Plan and Budget Commission of Iran's Majles believes the return of Iraq to world oil market would not adversely affect Iran's oil export and revenues.

Hojjat ol-Eslam Dorri Najafabadi told IRNA on Monday [29 January] that putting the rise in the gross production of the world especially the industrial countries at 3 to 4 percent, the oil demand would be on the rise and Iran will not be harmed once Iraqi oil enters the market.

Iraqi President Saddam Husayn has recently agreed to export as much as dlrs. 2 billion worth of oil for meeting internal needs of the country.

Najafabadi added that if the current OPEC production ceiling is maintained, it seems reasonable that the less populated OPEC members with high quota would consider giving more share to Iraq.

Iran Denies Backing Formation of Kurdish Federation in Iraq

LD2901225596 Tehran IRNA in English 2243 GMT 29 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Ankara, Jan. 29, IRNA — The press attache of the Iranian embassy here, in a letter issued Monday [29 January], refuted the allegations of the Istanbul daily 'SABAH' that Iran has revised its stance on developments in Iraq and given its consent to formation of Kurdish federation in northern Iraq.

The letter said one of the key principles of the Islamic Republic of Iran's foreign policy was respect for the independence and territorial integrity of all countries, especially of neighboring states.

It added that the Islamic Republic of Iran believed that any instability in neighboring countries would create problems for the whole region. The letter said the Islamic Republic of Iran had declared its positions at international sessions and at bilateral talks with other countries, even during the Iraqi imposed war (1980-88), that it casts no covetous eyes on Iraqi soil.

It recalled that Iran's position throughout the war was defensive with insistence on Iraq's territorial integrity.

The letter said that at the trilateral talks involving Tehran, Ankara and Damascus, the Islamic Republic of Iran underlined the need for the maintenance of Iraq's territorial integrity.

Even while mediating between rival Kurdish factions in northern Iraq, Tehran had always laid stress that Iraq's territorial integrity should be maintained and that the Iraqi Kurds and others, should avoid internationalizing the Kurdish issue, for the sake of preventing the dismemberment of Iraq.

The Iranian attache said that Iraq's internal political system was the sole concern of Iraqi people, and foreign countries had no right [to] interfere.

The letter also referred to the claim of the Turkish daily that Iran was having links with an outlawed Turkish group in Turkey, and regretted that 'SABAH' has made such allegations despite the fact that Iran and Turkey maintain close contacts with each other and hold regular sessions aimed at maintaining security on their borders.

The Turkish daily had alleged in its Saturday issue that Iran has changed its stance vis-a-vis northern Iraq, and was in favour of a federal government in Iraq that could lead to formation of a federation of Iraqi Shi'ite Muslims.

Iranian Foreign Ministry Official Comments on Incidents in Bahrain

JN2701121096 Paris Radio Monte Carlo in Arabic 1630 GMT 26 Jan 96

[From the "Week's Event" program by Salim Badawi]

[FBIS Translated Text] This "Week's Event" deals with the disturbances in Bahrain and their connection foreign parties, particularly regional ones. Manama implicitly accused Iran, but some Bahraini newspapers recently directly accused Tehran of involvement in the violence, an accusation that was rejected by Iranian officials. In an exclusive statement to the "Week's Event," Hoseyn Sheykholeslam, under secretary in the Iranian Foreign Ministry, said Iran supports regional stability and tranquility in Bahrain.

[Begin recording] [Sheykholeslam] These accusations are totally baseless and are probably part of a propaganda plan for local consumption. More than other states, we need stability in the Persian Gulf, because regional instability will lead to a larger presence of foreign forces in it. Therefore, such events and provocations are not in the interest of the Islamic Republic of Iran. We hope the problems in Bahrain will be resolved and believe that avoiding violence and adopting dialogue are the best means to do so. We do not think it would be in our interest or the interest of the region to keep the problem unresolved.

[Badawi] But what is the real Iranian position on the events in Bahrain and the confrontation between the Bahraini Government and the opposition, particularly the opposition with a Shiite majority?

[Sheykholeslam] Clashes in Bahrain are not confined to the Shiites and the government, as the foreign mass media has tried to portray. The situation is that all the Shiite and Sunni groups and factions, even the nationalist factions, are calling for a number of reforms. We hope the two sides will arrive at a mutually satisfactory solution as soon as possible. All the Bahraini parties should realize that tranquility is an essential requirement in the region. [end recording]

Tehran Reports Sinking of UAE Oil Tanker in Persian Gulf

LD3001104096 Tehran IRNA in English 0959 GMT 30 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Bandar Lengeh, Hormuzgan Prov., Jan. 30, IRNA — An oil tanker of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), sank in the Persian Gulf on Monday [29 January], reported Ali Shamlu, governor of Lavan Island, on Tuesday.

The vessel, named Ankarad and with a capacity of 803 tons, belonged to the M.T. Ankarad company of Dubai. It was returning to Dubai from the Iranian port of Bushehr and sank only 1.5 miles from the Lavan Island.

The tanker was empty when the accident occurred, the official said, adding that its crew of two captains and seven sailors, were rescued by tugboats of the Iranian oil company.

Lavan Island is situated east of Bandar Langeh. It is the third largest Iranian island in the Persian Gulf after Qesham and Kish.

U.S. Accusations Against Iran Over Counterfeit Dollar Bills Viewed

LD2901153796 Tehran IRNA in English 1502 GMT 29 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Jan. 29, IRNA — As part of Washington's anti-Iran schemes aimed at affecting and deviating the independent foreign policy of the Islamic Republic, American officials have embarked on accusing Iran of printing fake dollar bills.

The ABC T.V. network of the U.S. recently quoted U.S. officials as claiming that the counterfeit U.S. dollar bills have been traced down in Syria, al-Biqa' valley and North Korea which have close relations with Iran. The T.V. quoted a U.S. central bank official as having said that the fake dollars have been printed so skillfully that even the central bank of the U.S. could not distinguish them from real one.

Since the victory of the Islamic revolution in 1979, the U.S. has never spared any hostile actions against Iran aimed at forcing Tehran to follow U.S. regional policies. In fact the U.S. has declared a war on Iran in the past two decades. The U.S. allegations which had already been raised by an American daily could not influence any country in the world especially Washington's European allies because Europe knows well that the accusations are unfounded and politically-motivated.

Political observers believe that raising the charge that Iran was printing fake dollar bills is a face saving attempt by the Clinton administration to justify and make good on its mistake in allocating budget for covert subversive actions againt the Tehran government, before the world public opinion.

The observers believe that printing of the national currencies of those countries not toeing the U.S. line, is a common policy of the U.S. to undermine economy of those countries and pressure them to bow to the U.S. policy. Experts said the U.S. distributes and spends fake dollar bills on secret subversive actions in the countries which are not on the side of the U.S., thus preventing the value of the dollar from falling in the monetary system of the globe.

A European diplomat based in Tehran, said if Washington's charge had been true, Iran would not have been faced with increasing inflation, nor would have it offered hundreds of millions of dollars worth of oil to international markets.

Tehran Paper Criticizes U.S. 'Arrogant' Attitude Toward Europe

NC2601134596 Tehran TEHRAN TIMES in English 18 Jan 96 p 2

[Editorial: "Distancing From U.S. Line, Reviving Europe's Honor"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The French Foreign Minister, Herve de Charette, said on Tuesday [16 January] that France is determined to play a more prominent role in the Middle East, a region where the United States presently has the dominating influence.

As the most powerful country in the Mideast, Iran is opposed to any foreign meddling in the region. Tehran has always reiterated that the Middle East, particularly the Persian Gulf, should be totally controlled by the regional countries.

However, the French Government's step toward dissociating itself from the U.S. hegemonic policies, seeking to follow an independent course in its foreign policy is a positive move. The latest French foreign policy is probably marking an end to Europe's subservience to the U.S.

Indeed, following the end of the Cold War, the U.S. has not only been bullying the Third World, but it has also been bossing and setting the line for its European allies.

A clear instance of the U.S. arrogant and authoritative attitude toward Europe is the Washington's threat to punish any European country dealing with Iranian oil companies. Such an attitude is an utter breach of the international laws and a clear violation of the WTO's provisions.

It is surprising that Europe has not reacted yet to the U.S. commercial blackmail as firmly as it is expected to. Although France has been very outspoken about the cultural invasion of the Hollywood and its political blackmail, other European countries have expressed reserved or ambivalent views on the U.S. commercial ransom.

France's determination to follow an independent line in foreign policy is praiseworthy. Let us hope that other European countries will follow suit, proving that Europe as a unified entity will no longer toe the line and tread on the U.S. heels.

International Commerce Group Opposes U.S. Sanctions Against Iran

LD2601221796 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 2030 GMT 26 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The International Chamber of Commerce has openly opposed the U.S. sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The head of the International Chamber of Commerce in a letter to the U.S. International Council of Commerce has repeated that the chamber has consistently opposed U.S. economic sanctions against Iran which are aimed at political gains.

According to the Central News Unit from Paris, the head of the International Chamber has referred to chamber's ongoing opposition to such actions and has said that the efforts of the U.S. administration to impose economic sanctions against Iran has been a source of grave concern among many commercial circles.

In the letter he has also expressed concern over the position of some American companies and called on the U.S. International Council of Commerce to convey his views to the U.S. administration and members of the congress.

The head of the International Chamber of Commerce is the most senior international commercial authority to protest openly against U.S. sanctions against Iran.

Iranian Relations With Kazakhstan Expand Despite U.S., 'Zionists'

NC2801221796 Mashhad KHORASAN in Persian 16 Jan 96 pp 1, 11

[Editorial: "Expansion of Tehran-Almaty Relations: A Step Toward Strengthening of the Regional Economy"]

[FBIS Translated Text] The visit by First Vice President Dr. Hasan Habibi to Kazakhstan is actually the second visit by a high-ranking Iranian official to that country since it gained independence. Previously, during Mr. Hashemi-Rafsanjani's visit to Kazakhstan, dozens of economic and political agreements were signed. Mr. Hashemi-Rafsanjani's visit was considered by the people and officials in both countries as a turning point in the history of friendly relations.

Apart from their many cultural and historic ties, Iran and Kazakhstan agree on many issues, including those concerning the regional economy and the Caspian Sea's legal status.

Iran was among the first countries to recognize Kazakhstan after it gained independence from the former Soviet Union and to establish relations with it on the ambassadorial level, hence the respect with which officials in Almaty have always regarded the Islamic Republic of Iran. In northern Iran, the provinces of Gilan and Mazandaran neighbor Kazakhstan on the Caspian Sea. This has facilitated trade and economic relations. Cultural, historic, and linguistic closeness, as well as a common border and history of exchanges between the two masses are among the points that justify the larger degree of closeness and cooperation that exists between the two countries.

Among the Central Asian republics, the Republic of Kazakstan is of number one importance because of its economic and commercial potential and its extremely rich resources. Also, in comparison with the other Central Asian countries, Kazakhstan's economic successes during the post-independence years have been spectacular.

According to official studies, in terms of economic capabilities, Kazakhstan ranks third after Russia and Ukraine among the independent countries of the former Soviet Union. And it is all these potentials and capabilities that have strengthened the two countries' political will to consolidate their relations and to expand their cooperation.

Therefore, despite pressures by America and the Zionist regime on setting limits for Iran's relations with Almaty, the officials in Kazakhstan continue to firmly believe in the need to expand relations with Iran. And, the Islamic Republic of Iran, in turn, highlights the need to consolidate its relations with Kazakhstan as one of the most important countries in Central Asia, and has exerted major efforts toward this end.

Iranian Official Underlines Importance of Ties With Pakistan

LD2701121696 Tehran IRNA in English 1031 GMT 27 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Jan 27 (IRNA) — Pakistani Ambassador to Tehran Khalid Mahmud conferred here Saturday [27 January] with a member of the Majles Foreign Policy Committee, Saeed Rajaie Khorasani [name as received].

The two sides exchanged views over recent regional developments, the Afghan imbroglio, the Kashmir issue and bilateral ties between Iran and Pakistan.

Rajaie Khorasani, who is a representative of the Tehran Constituency to the Islamic Consultative Assembly, underlined Iran's inclination to expand cordial relations with all countries in the region, particularly Pakistan.

Iranian Official Hopeful of Expanding Ties With PRC

LD2701120596 Tehran IRNA in English 1110 GMT 27 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Jan 27 (IRNA) — Chinese Ambassador to Tehran, Wang Shijie met and conferred with head of the Iran-China Friendship Group, [Hoseyn] Sobhaninia here on Saturday [27 January].

The Chinese diplomat, while expressing pleasure over his mission in Iran, hoped that effective steps will be taken during his tenure to expand bilateral ties.

Expressing satisfaction over the level of Irano-Chinese ties, the Iranian head of the Friendship Group, said that Iran is currently in the process of reconstruction and the People's Republic of China can cooperate with Iran in this respect.

Vietnamese Officials, Iranian Ambassador Meet in Hanoi

LD2901115396 Tehran IRNA in English 1028 GMT 29 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Jan. 29, IRNA — Head of the Vietnamese ruling party's foreign relations department, Hong Ha, said that Hanoi would welcome cooperation with Tehran in political, economic, cultural and parliamentary fields.

In a meeting with Iranian ambassador to Hanoi, Kamal Sajadi, in Hanoi today, Hong Ha, also head of association for Vietnam's parliamentary friendship groups, referred to the strategic role of Iran in the region and stressed the need for Tehran-Hanoi full cooperation.

Sajadi pointed to joint political and international stances of the two countries and said that bilateral cooperation will play a vital role in promoting Tehran-Hanoi relations.

Habibi: Tehran, Beijing Share Common Views on Issues

LD2801194996 Tehran IRNA in English 1857 GMT 28 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Jan. 28, IRNA — First Deputy President of Iran Hasan Habibi told visiting Chinese Ambassador Shiji Wang here Sunday [28 January] that the Islamic government would welcome closer relations and more diversified trade exchanges with China.

Habibi said the common outlooks of the two countries in relation to many regional and international topics is a good reason why the two countries could further expand their relations.

The first deputy president of Iran also deplored foreign presence in the Persian Gulf saying that the presence in that part of the world of foreign powers would be against regional peace and stability.

He said the Islamic Republic is also interested to cooperate with China in cultural areas such as exchange of college students and professors as well as offer help to China for the teaching of Persian in that country.

The new Chinese ambassador to Tehran, Shiji Wang, said in response that China and Iran had age-old relations with each other which, he said, he would try to broaden further in his capacity as Beijing's ambassador to Tehran.

Iranian Radio Commentary Views Turkish Coalition Difficulties

LD2701145396 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in English 1130 GMT 27 Jan 96

[Unattributed commentary]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Turkey's Motherland Party has rejected the offer by Tansu Ciller, leader of the True Path Party, to form a coalition government under her premiership on Thursday January 25. Ciller, who had been assigned by the Turkish President Suleyman Demirel to form a government, in her first step proposed a coalition with the right-wing party of Motherland, led by Mesut Yilmaz. Ciller even suggested that the prime minister's post be occupied by the two parties' leaders for a two-and-a-half-year period each. The rigid stance of the Motherland Party, however, not to form a coalition with any party has made things more difficult for the True Path Party, led by Ciller. In fact, the True Path Party, by rejecting the formation of a coalition with the Islamic Welfare Party was left with less choice and made more powerful the Motherland Party in its maneuvering. Mesut Yilmaz says he would agree with the coalition if he himself becomes the prime minister or a third party is appointed for the post. Although the True Path and Motherland parties share a lot of common views, the leaders of the two parties have differences in their personalities and ambitions. Most Turkish trade and political circles favor a merging of the two parties to preserve the secular principles of Turkey. But which party leads the right wing in Turkey is a matter of dispute by the leaders of the two parties of True Path and Motherland. The rivalries between the two parties have caused a deterioration of the economic and political situation.

The problems in Turkey are mainly rooted in the different points of views of the parties involved in the coalition government that include right- and left-wing parties. At any rate most political observers believe the coalition of the True Path and the Motherland parties in Turkey is quite probable under the circumstances. Otherwise there will be the dissolution of the parliament and the holding of new elections in the country, picturing not a bright future for getting out of the political deadlock in Turkey.

Gambian Minister Denounces 'U.S. Hostile Policies' Toward Iran

LD2801113596 Tehran IRNA in English 1053 GMT 28 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Jan 28 (IRNA) — The visiting Gambian Foreign Minister Bou Bakr A. Chgeneh [name as received] in a meeting here Sunday [28 January] with his Iranian counterpart 'Ali Akbar Velayati discussed promotion of bilateral relations in the economic, political and cultural fields.

Chgeneh arrived here Saturday on a two-day official visit and was greeted at the airport by the Iranian foreign minister.

Denouncing U.S. hostile policies towards the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Gambian minister termed the U.S. stance as an obvious case of interference in the domestic affairs of a free and independent state.

Referring to the crucial role played by the Islamic Republic in the whole region and throughout the globe, he voiced his country's interest in making use of Iran's experiences in implementing its development projects.

The latest regional and international developments were also among major topics discussed by the two officials.

Expressing satisfaction over the opening of the Gambian embassy in Tehran, Velayati announced readiness to upgrade Tehran-Banjul ties in different areas of trade, agriculture, fisheries, tourism, and education.

Gambian Foreign Minister Arrives in Tehran on Visit

LD2701195796 Tehran IRIB Television Third Program Network in English 1915 GMT 27 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Heading a senior political-economical delegation, the Gambian foreign minister arrived in Tehran on Saturday.

Talking in a post-arrival interview, the Gambian official noted that his trip was aimed at discussing issues of mutual interest besides the expansion of bilateral relations.

Also speaking Iran's foreign minister, Mr. Velayati pointed out that having ties with Muslim and African states was on the top of Iran's foreign policy agenda. He said that Iran's ties with Gambia will be promoted in accordance with the Islamic conference ratifications.

Rafsanjani Receives Visiting Gambian Foreign Minister

LD2901115096 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 1030 GMT 29 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] President Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani received Gambia's foreign minister and special envoy of the Gambian president today. The Gambian minister gave him a written message from General [title as heard] Yahya Jammeh, president of Gambia.

Mr. Baboucar Blaise Jagne gave President Hashemi-Rafsanjani a comprehensive report on the latest developments and the political, social, and economic situation in Gambia. He said: After achieving its independence, Gambia is struggling with some difficulties which have been imposed by colonialist countries on the Muslim people of that country.

The Gambian president's special envoy described Islam as the only power to be relied on for the progress and strengthening of societies, and for confrontation with enemies. He called for the Islamic Republic of Iran's assistance in the technical, economic, health, and training fields to eliminate Gambia's problems.

Mr. Hashemi-Rafsanjani, for his part, said that he is happy that Gambia is committed to Islam, adding: One of the principles of Iran's foreign policy is to help African and Third World countries, especially Muslim countries. We are prepared to place at the disposal of these countries our technical, economic, and industrial experience.

At the meeting, President Hashemi-Rafsanjani instructed that a specialist team from the Islamic Republic of Iran should set off for Gambia for the purpose of studying ways of assisting Muslim Gambia.

Iran, Gambia Sign Memorandum of Understanding

LD3001121896 Tehran IRIB Television First Program Network in Persian 1030 GMT 30 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The foreign ministers of Iran and Gambia this morning signed a memorandum of understanding. On the basis of this memorandum, the two countries have agreed to study ways of expanding ties in political, economic, commercial, cultural, technical, and agricultural fields. Also in this memorandum, the two countries have expressed satisfaction with the excellent level of bilateral relations and have stressed the need for setting up a joint commission.

Ugandan President Arrives in Tehran for Visit

LD2801162896 Tehran IRNA in English
1622 GMT 28 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Jan. 28, IRNA — Ugandan President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni arrived here Sunday [28 January] evening and was welcomed in Sa'ad Abad complex in northern Tehran by his Iranian counterpart Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani.

The visiting president, accompanied by Ugandan minister of foreign affairs, is to leave here for Beijing on Monday for an official visit to China.

Rafsanjani, Ugandan President Discuss Ties, Cooperation

LD2801221796 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian
2030 GMT 28 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [passage omitted] After his arrival Yoweri Museveni, in a brief meeting with our country's president, said that the aim of his visit to Tehran was to discuss expansion of relations and bilateral cooperation.

President Hashemi-Rafsanjani and President Museveni met this afternoon and exchanged opinions on issues of mutual interest, including joint cooperation over international issues, ways of further increasing commercial and technical exchanges, and benefiting from Iran's useful experiences in different fields.

Museveni pointed to the substantial progress made by Iran in different fields and Iran's current capabilities. He called for an increase in the two countries' cooperation and for Iran to assist Uganda in industrial and economic affairs. He noted the political importance and effective role played by Iran in establishing trade and industrial relations with African countries.

The Ugandan president thanked Iran for participating in Uganda's international trade fair and called for Iran's commercial presence in his country and for joint investment by the two countries in the industrial and agricultural fields.

Hashemi-Rafsanjani, on his part, said that the policy of expanding relations with Third World countries — notably with the countries of the African continent — was among Iran's principled programs and one of the important objectives of the Islamic revolution. He declared that our country is prepared to provide more assistance and support toward the economic and social development of the peoples of African countries.

He stressed the importance of the maintenance of peace and tranquillity in the African continent, reminding that all the major difficulties and differences in the region should be resolved peacefully through that continent's countries and with the aim of strengthening peace and stability there. He added that Iran was prepared to participate in resolving regional problems and establishing mutual understanding.

The president of Iran expressed delight at the growth of relations between the two countries, saying: Iran does not set any limits to the expansion of relations and links in all fields of mutual interest with African countries, and we always welcome increases in cooperation.

At the end of this meeting, the Ugandan president said that his country was prepared to establish regular air links between Iran and Africa and to strengthen Iran's shipping routes with the African continent.

Museveni also invited our country's president to pay an official visit to Uganda and Hashemi-Rafsanjani accepted the invitation.

The foreign ministers and a number of senior officials of the two countries were present at this meeting.

Tehran Radio Views Ugandan President's Visit, Joint Cooperation

NC2901075096 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian
0445 GMT 29 Jan 96

[Commentary by the News Research and Commentary Group]

[FBIS Translated Text] Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, who is in Tehran on a one-day visit to Iran, talked with President Hashemi-Rafsanjani last night. During the meeting the Ugandan president called for expanding bilateral cooperation and referred to economy and industry as favorable grounds for this.

Iran participated in the International Trade Fair in Uganda this [Iranian] year [ending 20 March 1996] and displayed its industrial achievements, agricultural goods, technical potential, and its know-how and expertise for participating in development projects. Our country's spectacular progress in these fields has attracted the attention of Ugandan officials, entrepreneurs, and industrialists, hence Kampala's expression of interest in expanding its commercial ties with Tehran. We have also witnessed the welcome in African and Asian countries for the expansion of economic cooperation with Iran. This stems from our country's goodwill in its foreign policy and from the low cost and favorable quality of Iranian services and goods.

The Islamic Republic's principled policy on expanding cooperation with developing countries, particularly the African continent, the objective of which is to consolidate South-South cooperation and to pave the way for developing countries to open up to one another and reduce their dependence on industrial goods, heralds Iran's expanding relations with the richly resourced, but poverty-stricken African countries.

Islamic Iran's technical potential is a good vehicle for highlighting Africa's hidden talents. Many of these talents and God-given riches were plundered by colonialists for years. A new form of colonialism is trying to enchain black Africa and plunder its resources. This is why the African countries, more vigilant and alert than ever, are now granting priority to consolidating cooperation among each other and relations with other developing countries.

In addition to economic cooperation, Iran pays special attention to active participation in solving regional problems and current crises in the African continent. This topic was discussed during last night's talks between our president and his Ugandan counterpart, who also stressed the need for a peaceful solution to conflicts and problems in Africa. One such conflict is the one between Uganda and Sudan; Iran has played an active role in trying to resolve it.

Mujahedin Organization To Run for Majlis Election

LD2601140996 Tehran IRNA in English
1351 GMT 26 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Jan. 26, IRNA — Behzad Nabavi said here Friday [26 January] that the Mujahedin Organization of the Islamic Revolution would propose their candidates for the upcoming Majlis elections for a symbolic participation only. He said the organization would not nominate candidates absolutely with the idea of getting into the legislative assembly of the state.

Nabavi said he understands that as compared with other groups and organizations his organization stands only a very slim chance of sending a candidate to the Majlis. He said his organization does not have some of the facilities for publicity which, in his judgment, are crucial in the elections.

Nabavi said as far as his political organization is concerned the idea of announcing candidates for the Islamic Consultative Assembly is merely an effort to contribute to the general fervor for the Majlis elections.

He said candidates of the Organization for Tehran City would be less than 30. He said the Mujahedin Organization of Islamic Revolution would not nominate candidates in other cities of Iran, but that they might support other candidates with whom they felt an ideological affiliation.

Iranian Editor Views Chances of Left-Wing Victory in Elections

LD2701151196 Tehran IRNA in English
1449 GMT 27 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Jan. 27, IRNA — Editor-in-chief of the publication ASR-E MA (OUR CONTEMPORARY ERA), the organ of Mojahedin Enqelab-e Eslami (Mojahedin of the Islamic Revolution), said here on Saturday that victory of the left wing in the forthcoming parliamentary elections directly depends on the unified participation of members of the wing in the elections.

Speaking to the reporter of IRNA's special team for monitoring the elections, Armin said under the status quo, if the left wing entered the political scene in an organized manner, its chance for victory would be more than the previous Majlis elections.

Armin who is a member of the Central Council of the Mojahedin of the Islamic Revolution (MIR) said at present there exists no organized left wing to run for the upcoming elections, slated for March 8.

However, he said the left wing was now trying to take a unified stance in order to prepare a list of its candidates.

On the political structure of the country, he said at present the political power is in the hands of both the traditional and modern right wingers, adding that the new left wing has also its influence in the country to some extent.

He predicted that the forthcoming elections would serve as a turning point in the four-year old ruling of the traditional right wingers.

On the fourth Majlis, he said the current Majlis has been formed through coalition between the traditional and modern right wingers and turned into a unified parliament with the slogan of social justice.

Iranian Newspaper Questions Validity of Election Propaganda

NC2801101496 Tehran SALAM in Persian 18 Jan 96 p 2

[From the "Hello SALAM" column]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Caller] We request that the Tehran Militant Clerics Society [TMCS] participate in the elections in order to safeguard the rights of the deprived, regardless of whether the Guardians' Council endorses their candidates. They cannot wriggle out of their obligations in this manner. Just as his eminence the imam stated: We are only responsible for performing our obligations; we are not responsible for the end results. It appears that by not nominating any candidates they are not resolving anything.

[SALAM] The last point made by our esteemed reader is absolutely correct. Not submitting a list of candidates can solve no problems. However, submission of a list and entering the election scene could generate scores of problems and other issues, not only for the TMCS but for the people as well, because it would shake the foundations of their beliefs.

During the elections, when the radio and television, which are the official tribunes [preceding word in English] of the government and system, give the people minute-by-minute warnings not to vote for mischief mongers, and the Guardians' Council jurisconsults announce right from the outset on radio and television that voting for such persons is tantamount to firing an arrow at the tents of Abu 'Abdallah al-Husayn, peace be upon him, what do you think people will think of their decision? What past erroneous developments should the people know about? Has this vast body of clerics, university professors, and others become mischief mongers overnight or were they always like this?

Did the imam and other officials know this earlier and keep silent, or were they unaware when they gave them important portfolios? Are these the only mischief mongers or are there others who will be exposed when they fall from power in the future?

If they were troublemakers in the past, what about all the national administrative matters that were in their hands? If they have become troublemakers overnight, why did they fall into this vortex? Yes, it is obvious that the radio, television, the whole administrative and juridical apparatus of the Guardians' Council did not even pause to consider what havoc they were inflicting on the people's perceptions when they initiated such propaganda!

Ayatollah Khalkhali Comments on Fifth Majles Elections

NC2801112396 Tehran SALAM in Persian 21 Jan 96 p 1

[From the News Desk]

[FBIS Translated Text] Ayatollah Sadeq Khalkhali believes that the current deputies in the Majles are to blame for high prices because they have approved bills and plans without even assessing their impact on the society. He said: Most of the present deputies will not make it to the Fifth Majles.

Khalkhali told the IRNA special elections correspondent: The people are having problems making ends meet. Rising prices will have an unpleasant effect on their participation in the Majles elections.

He said: We should engage in some serious thought in order to ameliorate the people's displeasure and to create circumstances conducive to their participation in the elections.

Khalkhali, who was the Qom deputy in the Third Majles, spoke about the electioneering activities, saying: We should provide the means for fair and equitable propaganda to all groups so that the Majles candidates can freely acquaint the people with their platforms.

Regarding the possibility of participation by members of the Tehran Militant Clerics Society [TMCS] in the Fifth Majles elections, Khalkhali stated: As far as I know, the TMCS members will not participate in the elections. It is possible that some of them may register as independent candidates.

Commenting on the chances of the technocrats [preceding word in English] winning seats in the Majles, Khalkhali stated: It is possible that members of this faction may have wonderful ideas, but they will not get the votes in this election.

Iranian Paper Stresses Importance of Unity in Election Campaign

LD2901110196 Tehran IRNA in English 0939 GMT 29 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Jan. 29, IRNA — Nowadays that the stalwart Iranian people are getting prepared to go to the polls in order to send their representatives to the fifth Majles, it is everyone's duty to refrain from whatever leading to discord and rift among the ranks of people, wrote the editorial of the Persian daily 'JOMHURI-YE ESLAMI' on Monday.

The editorial was quoting remarks by the leader of the Islamic revolution, Ayatollah 'Ali Khamene'i, in reply to a letter asking the supreme leader to make a comment on the election campaign. The leader further called for mobilization of all forces in order to hold the forthcoming parliamentary elections even more gloriously, the paper added.

The editorial went on to say that President Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, addressing country's senior executives, also reiterated that the presence of different views and outlooks on the scene of elections should not undermine the national unity and solidarity. The president underlined the fact that, in any election, competition is something quite natural. President Rafsanjani pointed out that he would make efforts to ensure the freedom and validity of elections and maintain social unity and solidarity.

This is not the first time that the leader of the Islamic revolution and senior government officials call on people to safeguard their unity. But the leader's recent calling on different political groups to exercise self-restraint and patience and refrain from whatever causing discord and rift among people at the threshold of parliamentary elections indicates that the leader expects all groups to do their utmost so as to converge different political views and create a cordial atmosphere in society.

It should not be forgotten that the Islamic revolution and government face a great number of sworn enemies. Under such circumstances, although the difference in tastes and views and outlooks can be tolerated, such differences should not become so great as to harm or weaken the unity and solidarity of the revolutionary forces.

The editorial added that the election campaign and tight competition by political groups are both acceptable and favorable, but they have defined limits and should by no means undermine social unity. There is no doubt that people have the final say, and they will [word indistinct] candidates from different political groups, so that the fifth Majles will be a platform for the most efficient representatives.

An optimum parliament has a makeup which is balanced with regard to different factions. The people, while voting for their favorite candidates, will try to send those deputies to Majles who have the necessary qualifications for performing the demanding task of decision-making and offering new ideas, JOMHURI-YE ESLAMI concluded.

Tehran University Chancellor on Election Participation

LD2901112596 Tehran IRNA in English 1043 GMT 29 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Jan. 29, IRNA — Chancellor of Tehran University, Mohammad Reza 'Aref, in an interview with the Persian daily 'IRAN' on Monday [29 January] said that he believes presence of the senior executives on the scene of the forthcoming elections for the fifth Majles has boosted people's enthusiasm for going to the polls.

He added that the government officials who issued the statement were prompted by their interest in the massive turnout of people in the elections. Also, 'Aref said that the signatories of the statement have been in charge of key positions in the country ever since the victory of the 1979 Islamic revolution. Presenting a list of candidates by those officials, who are called Khedmatgozaran-e Sazandegi [Reconstruction Officials], can encourage electoral competitions so that the most efficient and qualified candidates will be elected, he noted.

Pointing to the significant status of Majles as an independent body, 'Aref stressed that the deputies, in addition to commitment to the Islamic revolution's objectives and political awareness, should possess expert knowledge so as to be able to probe the different issues in Majles specialized committees. He added that, in view of the present world's complexities and continuous progress in scientific and technical areas, the deputies with expert knowledge and specialized education can play a vital role in resolving the country's technical problems.

Regarding the necessity of participation of the Iranian electorates from all walks of life, particularly university staff and students, in the March 8 elections, Tehran University chancellor reiterated that such participation, according to the late Imam Khomeyni and the leader of the Islamic revolution Ayatollah 'Ali Khamene'i, is a lawful duty. Furthermore, all those able to run for parliament should take steps in this regard.

Calling on all students and university professors to actively participate in elections, 'Aref said that, through their participation, they can ensure the validity of elections, exercise their political rights and play their role in society.

No Joint List of Majles Candidates Expected for Tehran

LD3001083996 Tehran IRNA in English 0636 GMT 30 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Jan. 30, IRNA — Jame'eh-ye Ruhaniyat-e Mobarez [Militant Clergy Association] (JRM) of Tehran and Khedmatgozaran-e Sazandegi [Reconstruction Officials] will not come up with a single list of candidates for the Tehran constituency in the March 8 elections for the 270-seat Majles, the morning daily 'IRAN' reported Tuesday [30 January].

"As far as I know at present there is no talk about a joint list of nominees by the two groups," IRAN further quoted Yahyavi as having said.

Yahyavi, a former acting minister and a POW of the Iraqi-imposed war, is close to JRM. In the fourth Majles elections, he was a joint candidate by the JRM and Majma'-ye Ruhaniyun-e Mobarez [Militant Clerics Association] (MRM).

Procedure for the forthcoming Majles elections started Tuesday as the first official step was taken. Beginning today all interested in running in the elections will have one week to file their applications with the Interior Ministry and its departments throughout the country. All the applications will be reviewed by a special team and those whose eligibility and qualifications have been approved will be potential candidates.

Iranian Interior Ministry on Elections Security Steps

LD3001115996 Tehran IRIB Television First Program Network in Persian 1030 GMT 30 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Simultaneously, with the registration of candidates for the 5th Majlis elections which started today, offices for maintaining security and law and order during the elections also began their work throughout the country.

According to Mr. Bolandian, deputy interior minister in charge of security and law and order, the duties of these offices throughout the country is to formulate policies on security; create the right atmosphere for the elections and maintain calm by preventing any form of disorder.

Mr. Bolandian added: Campaigning in ways which will disrupt public order is banned and putting up communiques and posters on traffic boards and public and private buildings will be considered an offense.

He said that it was forbidden to use government facilities for election purposes and that civil servants were also banned from using office hours for the purposes of electioneering. He emphasized: Defamation of the candidates of the Majlis is forbidden, as from the time of the registration of their names, and anyone who does this will be dealt with as offenders.

Independent Candidates To Run in Iran Majles Elections

LD3001120296 Tehran IRNA in English 1030 GMT 30 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Jan. 30, IRNA — Shiraz representative to Majlis, Ghasem Sholeh Sadi, in an interview with the Persian daily 'IRAN' Tuesday said the independent faction is to present a list of candidates who will run for the parliamentary seats in the forthcoming elections.

He added that there will be 30 names on the list from among the university professors specializing in politics, law and economy.

Sholeh Sadi went on to say that the faction will also nominate candidates from constituencies in the Iranian provinces who are not affiliated to any of the existing political factions.

"We have told those affiliated to the independent faction to file their applications as independent candidates so that, following consideration by the Council of Guardians, we will put their names on one list," he noted.

Regarding the date of formation of 'Independent Party of the Iranian people,' Shiraz representative remarked, "although the party constitution and manisfesto have been drawn up, examining the application for the party license by the Interior Ministry has been postponed until after the March 8 parliamentary elections."

Former Iran Majles Candidates Allowed To Reapply for 7 Days

LD3001121096 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 1030 GMT 30 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The country's elections headquarters has announced that those candidates who decide not to participate in the elections after registering their names can only reapply for candidacy in the elections during the seven days of the registration period.

In a statement issued today, the country's elections headquarters also said that on the basis of Note Two, Article Nine of the Election Law of the Islamic Majles, those people who register their names in more than one constituency will have their candidacy cancelled and will not be able to stand in that round of the Majles elections.

Iran's Bahonar: 'Certain Circles' Seek To 'Metamorphose' System

LD2601171296 Tehran IRNA in English 1511 GMT 26 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Jan. 26, IRNA — Member of the governing body of the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Majles) Mohammad Reza Bahonar said here today that the ruling ideology 'velayat' (supreme jurisprudence) which is observed in the Fourth Majles, will continue to be adhered in the Fifth Majles.

'Velayat' (supreme jurisprudence) recognizes the leader and his edicts as being religiously, socially, economically and politically supreme. He said deputies at the Fifth Majles would certainly be devout Muslims committed to the values of the Islamic revolution. He added that deputies reresenting the militant ulema in Tehran at the next session of the legislative assembly of Iran might perhaps be a bit different in composition from their predecessors in the current session of the Majles although their ideological standing, he noted, would be the same as its has thus far been.

The Majles official also observed that certain circles were apparently trying to "metamorphose" the political system in Iran which, he said, the Majles would have to fight back vigilantly. Bahonar commented that political parties in the Islamic Republic must not tend to be merely entities with power but rather institutions capable of offering constitutionally correct and plausible ideas.

Iran Majles Deputy Comments on Budget Bill, Oil Revenues

LD2701124096 Tehran IRNA in English
1154 GMT 27 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Jan. 27, IRNA — Rapporteur of the Majlis Plan and Budget Commission, Mohammad Baqer Noubakht Haqiqi [name as received], said the oil revenues predicted in the budget bill for next calendar year to start March 21 [Iranian year 1375], would be earned without any difficulty if nothing goes wrong in the world.

In an interview with IRNA, Noubakht said that as annual budgets follow a normal and specific course, no innovation or new development should be expected from the budget bill.

He said the public revenues forecast in the 1375 budget amount to rls. 56,000 billion.

According to Dr. Noubakht, rls. 28,000 billion, rls. 11,000 billion and rls. 17,000 billion are expected to be earned from oil sale, taxation and other incomes.

The amount of oil sale in the first nine months of the current year (started March 21, 1995) was two percent more than the predicted plan, saying each barrel of oil was sold for dlrs. 15.9 on the average during this period.

He said in case the oil prices drop on international markets by the end of this year, the average price of oil will not be less than dlrs. 15.7 per barrel. This is while the price for each barrel of oil has been predicted at dlrs. 15.50 for next year.

On the tax revenues of the country, he said about 34 percent of the incomes are gained from imports.

The tariff rate for customs and import duties is about four percent at present while the government has out the rate at ten percent in the next year budget.

Noubakht said the performance concerning other incomes was not satisfactory in the first nine months of the current year and only 88 percent of it was materialized. The government should try to make up for it, he said.

The foreign exchange revenues gained from oil sale next year has been predicted to stand at dlrs. 14.349 billion, dlrs. 1.462 billion of which has been earmarked for purchase of basic commodities.

Noubakht, a deputy from Rasht in the Majlis, referred to inflation as one of the main problems facing the Iranian economy, saying the price of some government services would be increased next year to finance investments.

Rls. 75,000 billion in loan will be granted by the banking system next year which will in turn raise liquidity by 25 percent, he said, adding this might push up inflation.

He predicted that inflation might be about 30 percent next year.

Iranian Magazine Director Sentenced for 'Insulting' Leader

LD2701135096 Tehran IRNA in English
1307 GMT 27 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Jan. 27, IRNA — Director and consessionaire of a monthly magazine, GARDOON, 'Abbas Maroufi [name as received] has been sentenced by a Tehran court to six months in prison and 35 lashes for publishing untrue materials and insulting the leader, Persian daily IRAN reported Saturday [27 January].

Found guilty by the press jury on Thursday, 'IRAN' said, Maroufi was also banned from engaging in any journalistic activities for two years. The magazine was also suspended. Maroufi can appeal the verdict.

Tabriz Open University in Iran Denies Foreign Media Claim

LD2901120696 Tehran IRNA in English
1134 GMT 29 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tabriz, E. Azerbaijan Prov., Jan. 29, IRNA — Vice-Chancellor of the provincial Islamic Open University here Monday dismissed hostile propaganda spread by certain foreign mass media alleging that Iran's security forces have closed the literary society of students in that university.

Esma'il Rafi'ian added that the weekly meetings of the society are held Thursdays, with the exception of public holidays and term exams.

The Baku based daily 'EURASIA' in its latest issue claimed that the activities of the literary center have been banned prompted by reading of Turkish poems by the students in its sessions.

Radio Liberty, affiliated to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), quoting the daily, on Saturday claimed that the reason behind the move was that the Turkish poems read in the sessions had pan- Turkism content.

Rafi'ian reiterated that students as well as regional poets usually read and review their poems composed in Azeri and Farsi languages during the weekly sessions of the society.

Religious Minorities in Iran To Mark Revolution Anniversary

LD2901162496 Tehran IRNA in English 1552 GMT 29 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Jan. 29, IRNA — Iranian Jewish community announced in Tehran today that it will hold special prayer on February 9 to mark the anniversary of the victory of the Islamic revolution.

The Ten-Day Dawn (February 1-11) is celebrated in Iran as the anniversary of the establishment of the Islamic Republic in Iran.

Meanwhile, Iranian Assyrians issued a separate statement today saying that Tehran's Assyrian community will hold special ceremony to mark the anniversary of the victory of the Islamic revolution.

Iran's Guardian Council Objects to 10 Points in Budget Bill

LD2901200996 Tehran IRIB Television First Program Network in Persian 1530 GMT 29 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] After reviewing the country's budget bill for the year 1375 [ending 21 March 1997], the Guardian Council has announced its views on its various articles. The Guardian Council has objected to 10 points [mored] in the budget bill on the basis that they contravene the Constitution and religious principles.

Official Says Tehran Now Able To Overhaul C-130 Fleet

LD2901212396 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 2030 GMT 29 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The Islamic Republic of Iran is now self- sufficient in carrying out all the necessary repairs on C-130 transport planes.

According to a Central News Unit report from Mashhad, the commander of the department for the overhaul [previous word in English] of C-130s at Imam Reza Airbase, said on Monday morning [29 January] that all stages of the overhaul of C-130 planes were now being carried out successfully by Iranian experts at this base.

He said that repairing each of the C-130s took around 25,000 to 30,000 hours, adding that during this time, the planes were repaired and tuned according to the latest international standards.

He said: Pilots who have flown the overhauled planes have confirmed the high quality of the work carried out, saying that the overhaul compares favorably with what can be accomplished in foreign countries.

Nepal & Bhutan

Nepalese Leaders Receive Indian External Affairs Minister

BK2701083496 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0245 GMT 27 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kathmandu has assured New Delhi that it will never allow the use of its territory to activities detrimental to India's interests. The assurance was given to the external affairs minister, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, during his talks with his Nepalese counterpart, Dr. Prakash Chandra Lohani, in Kathmandu yesterday. The matter came up when Mr. Mukherjee referred to the attempts by some elements to use Nepal as a transit point for terrorist activities.

Later, Mr. Mukherjee also called on the Nepalese prime minister, Mr. Sher Bahadur Deuba. Briefing mediapersons in Kathmandu, the foreign secretary, Mr. Salman Haider, said both Mr. Lohani and the Nepalese prime minister expressed their keen desire to enhance cooperation with India in harnessing water resources for mutual benefit. The foreign secretary said Nepal raised the issue of huge trade imbalance with India and alternative trade routes to Bangladesh. It was agreed that the Indo-Nepalese Joint Committee on Trade and Transit should meet soon. The Nepalese prime minister will visit India on the 12th and 13th of next month.

Later, speaking at a banquet hosted by his Nepalese counterpart last night, Mr. Mukherjee stressed the necessity for a consensus approach on various issues for further cooperation between the two countries.

Nepalese Officials Discuss Water, Economic Issues With Indian Minister

BK2701102096 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0830 GMT 27 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] India and Nepal today held wide-ranging talks for cooperation in water resources and enhancing tourism, trade, and other economic matters. The talks were held between the external affairs minister, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, and the Nepalese counterpart, Dr. Prakash Chandra Lohani, in Kathmandu. They were assisted by high-level delegations from both sides. Talking to newsmen later, Mr. Mukherjee said the talks focused on harnessing the vast potential of hydroelectric power and increasing Indian investment in Nepal to reduce the trade imbalance.

Nepal: Indian Minister Reacts to Enactment of Brown Amendment

BK2801085496 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0830 GMT 28 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The external affairs minister, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, says India will not make any compromise on its security requirements. Talking to PTI in Kathmandu, Mr. Mukherjee said certain steps have already been taken and the country will go ahead with its security requirements.

Mr. Mukherjee was reacting to a question on the U.S. decision to lift its arms embargo against Pakistan. Asked whether India will lodge a protest with the United States over the decision by the Clinton administration, Mr. Mukherjee said Washington is well aware of the Indian position. He said New Delhi has made it known to Washington that resuming supplies of arms to Pakistan will heighten the threat perception in the region.

Nepalese Foreign Minister, Indian Counterpart View Treaty, Refugees

BK2801134596 Kathmandu THE KATHMANDU POST in English 27 Jan 96

[Report by Suman Pradhan — received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kathmandu, Jan 26 — Nepal will have to make considerable efforts to bring India around to its positions on the 1950 Nepal-India Treaty, and the repatriation of Bhutanese refugees to their homeland.

This much was clear from what was said to the press by Foreign Minister Prakash Chandra Lohani and his Indian counterpart Pranab Mukherjee after their brief talks at Shital Niwas [Foreign Ministry] here on Friday. The two leaders are to lead their respective delegations in full length bilateral talks scheduled for Saturday.

The two countrys' contrasting positions on the question of reviewing the 1950 Nepal-India Treaty came out to the fore once again when visiting Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee reiterated India's long-held position that the Treaty itself does not allow for revision or amendment of the provisions contained in the Treaty.

"So far the Treaty itself does not provide for amendment. Only that you can abrogate the Treaty by giving one year's notice. However, at the official level, certain areas (of the Treaty) are being examined, particularly Articles 2 and 6. But the Treaty itself does not provide for any amendment", Mukherjee said.

Foreign Minister Lohani, in his reply to a question about whether the revision of the Treaty will feature in talks, however said, "Well, I think it should be discussed so that it becomes more in tune with the times".

But when pointed out that the Indian External Affairs Minister had ruled out reviewing the Treaty, Lohani replied, "Well, this is my view".

Asked if he would follow-up the efforts made by former UML [United Marxist-Leninist] Prime Minister Manmohan Adhikari during his visit to Delhi in April last year, Lohani said, "What we are about to do now is more important than what he (Adhikari) did then. We are raising all the issues of national interest".

Former Premier Adhikari had argued for the revision of the 1950 Treaty to make it more relevant to the times during his Delhi visit. After that visit, the two countries examined certain provisions of the Treaty, but the efforts have failed to make any headway due to India's insistence that the Treaty cannot be reviewed.

Some analysts here argue that Nepal should abandon its demands for a revision of the 1950 Treaty and should instead convince India for a completely new treaty which ought to be relevant to the present times.

To convince India of that, however, requires considerable efforts from Nepal. Indian leaders have pointed out that Nepal ought to decide whether or not it wants the present special relationship with India continued, and on Friday, Mukherjee again stressed the point.

"The point that should be kept in view is that the Treaty is an instrument which reflects the special type of relation the two countries have. The moot point is not the Treaty, but what type of relations we would like to have, and both the countries have said that we would like to continue the special relationship", said Mukherjee.

Similar contrasting positions on the Bhutanese refugee problem cropped up when the question was put to Mukherjee. Nepal has for long urged India to take an active role in the refugee repatriation dialogue between Nepal and Bhutan. But India has steadfastly refused to mediate.

"We expect that two friendly countries Nepal and Bhutan should resolve the issues through bilateral efforts", Mukherjee replied when the question of Indian involvement was put to him.

Though that sounds like India is neutral in the problem, its neutrality was blown on January 17 when Indian authorities arrested Bhutanese refugees who were on a peace march to their homeland from their camps in Nepal.

In earlier comments to the press, Foreign Minister Lohani had expressed dismay at the Indian action and had asked, "Why were the refugees arrested by India now, and why not earlier while they were fleeing Bhutan?"

When this question was put to Mukherjee, he replied, they were arrested "because one country cannot be used to go to another. Persons can enter into India from Nepal, and persons can enter into India from Bhutan. But where there is some problems, I think before the final resolutions of these problems, it would not be appropriate to provide this (transit) facility to these number of people".

Lohani, for his part, did not comment on the issue saying it would be discussed Saturday during full length talks with his Indian counterpart.

Meanwhile, Nepalese officials have expressed hope that India will provide Nepal some additional transit facilities to Bangladeshi ports through its territory during these talks.

Foreign Minister Lohani summed up the optimism when he said, "Nepal and India are so good friends. I'm quite optimistic that we will make a great deal of progress on this".

Nepal's requests for transit facilities to Bangladesh "is under our active consideration", Mukherjee replied in answer to a query.

Nepal: Trade, Investment Discussed With Indian Minister

BK2801142196 Kathmandu THE KATHMANDU POST in English 28 Jan 96

[Report by a "POST reporter" — received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kathmandu, Jan 27 — Nepal could get most of what it seeks in trade concessions from India in its bid to narrow down the widening trade deficit between the two countries.

The ever growing trade imbalance which is tremendously in India's favour was one of the prominent issues that featured in talks between Foreign Minister Dr Prakash Chandra Lohani and visiting Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee here on Saturday.

Mukherjee who is leading a high level Indian delegation arrived here Friday, and held official talks today with the Nepalese delegation led by Lohani which lasted for a little more than two hours.

The thrust of the talks have focussed mainly on economic cooperation, trade and transit, and sharing of water resources. The Bhutanese refugee problem and the revision of the 1950 Nepal-India Treaty featured only slightly during Saturday's talks, say officials.

High-ranking officials who participated in the talks said the Indian side had been receptive of Nepalese requests to reduce trade barriers for Nepalese goods destined to India to help narrow down the trade deficit.

"We requested India to provide easy access to its markets for Nepalese goods. We put forward suggestions asking the Indian side to waive off various tariff and non-tariff barriers such as the countervailing duty India levies on Nepali exports", a highly placed Foreign Ministry official said.

"We also asked India to cancel the material requirement for Nepalese goods destined to India to facilitate Nepalese exports", he said.

"The Indian side said our requests would be considered positively. The Inter-Governmental Committee on trade and commerce will now continue the talks, and an agreement could be reached during Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba's upcoming India visit next month", the official said.

Nepali exports to India face a number of barriers, most notably the countervailing duty and material content regulation which business leaders here say have hampered Nepal's efforts to reduce the huge trade deficit with its southern neighbour The trade deficit in fiscal 1994-95 stood at Rs [rupees] 18 billion in India's favour.

The material content regulation requires Nepalese manufactured goods exported to India to have at least 50 percent of Nepalese or Indian raw materials — a requirement designed to keep away foreign products assembled in Nepal from the Indian market.

Another major Nepali request which India could agree to is the opening up of a corridor through Indian territory to Bangladesh to facilitate Nepal's third country trade. India has so far provided the Radhikapur route which has been found to be unfeasible and Nepal now seeks an additional route through Phulbari to Bangladeshi ports.

Indian Foreign Secretary Salman Haider, who is accompanying Foreign Minister Mukherjee, told newsmen that India would consider that request.

"It was noted that the existing route (Radhikapur route) was not proving fruitful to Nepalese business people.

In his talks with the Nepalese Foreign Minister, the Indian External Affairs Minister made it clear that if Radhikapur route had been established, it was in order to benefit Nepalese business people. And if now it was not serving that purpose, we are prepared to look at alternatives that has been suggested (by the Nepalese side)", he said.

Meanwhile, during his official talks with Lohani, Mukherjee suggested Nepal cancel restrictions on Indian investments in the country. Nepal Rashtra Bank [central bank] regulations require that prior permission must be obtained by investors who wish to invest in Indian currency, whereas no such permissions are needed for investment in US dollars.

No specific water resources projects were discussed by the ministers, but detailed talks on sharing of water resources were held later by the secretaries of water resources of both the countries which also included the power and energy secretaries of India.

According to officials who participated in the secretary-level talks on water resources, India has urged to start as soon as possible the Pancheswore project in the Mahakali river. On Tanakpur, India has asked Nepal to build consensus among all political parties to facilitate the ratification of Tanakpur Treaty by parliament.

The talks on water resources were still continuing late Saturday night, and officials said it would continue on Sunday as well.

Earlier, during the ministerial level talks, Foreign Minister Lohani stressed the need to allow private airlines of both the countries to fly into each other's country to boost tourism, sources say.

Commenting on this suggestion, Indian foreign secretary Salman Haider said, "This is another concrete suggestion from the Nepalese side, which the Indian side has said it will look at closely".

Nepal: Indian Minister Delays Departure After Inconclusive Talks

BK2901141196 Kathmandu THE KATHMANDU POST in English 29 Jan 96

[Report by "a POST reporter" — received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kathmandu, Jan 28 — Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee abandoned his return trip home late Sunday night after secretary level talks between Nepal and India on sharing of water resources failed to arrive at a conclusion.

Mukherjee who arrived here Friday for talks with Foreign Minister Prakash Chandra Lohani was scheduled to depart for Delhi at 8 PM local time. However, the marathon session of talks between the secretaries of water resources of both the countries failed to reach a conclusion even by 10 PM, forcing the visiting Indian leader to cancel his return trip to Delhi.

The secretary level negotiations included secretary of Water Resources, foreign secretary and environment secretary from the Nepalese side and secretaries of Foreign, Water, Power and Energy from the Indian side.

Mukherjee is now scheduled to depart early Monday. The negotiations on water resources began Saturday immediately after Lohani and Mukherjee concluded their two hour-long official talks on a broad range of bilateral issues, including water resources.

Officials who participated in the secretary level talks said the discussions hit a snag when differences on utilising the potential of Mahakali River cropped up late Saturday. Despite clear directions from the leaders of both delegations (Lohani and Mukherjee) to hammer out an agreement, the two sides were still unable to iron out the differences till late Sunday. There are indications the talks will continue late into the night.

Earlier during the day while addressing a group of newsmen at an informal gathering, Indian External Affairs Minister Mukherjee had once again reiterated India's position on the question of repatriating Bhutanese refugees to their homeland, the 1950 Nepal- India Treaty and overall economic cooperation between the two countries.

India stopped the peace march by Bhutanese refugees to their homeland, he said, because if they were allowed to continue on their way, it would have influenced Nepal-Bhutan talks on refugee repatriation.

"Besides, all three countries (Nepal, India and Bhutan) are clearly committed to the principle that they will not allow their soil to be used against each other by anyone. Still I believe that the refugee crisis can be solved bilaterally. Let us wait for the talks (between Nepal and Bhutan)", he said.

The visiting Indian leader again ruled out reviewing the 1950 Treaty, but added, "if there are irrelevant portions in the Treaty, we can examine them".

Asked to comment on his visit to Nepal, Mukherjee said he considered this trip to be very fruitful.

"The result of our discussions will make it possible to increase bilateral trade through more joint-venture projects in Nepal", he said.

Expanding joint-venture will be doubly beneficial to Nepal, he said, for it will also expand the manufacturing base of the country, and hence contribute to bridging the trade gap between the two countries once those units start exporting to India.

Nepal's trade deficit with India last year stood at Rs [rupees] 18 billion, a substantial volume for a country which has an annual budget of just over Rs 50 billion. Nepalese and Indian officials have expressed hope that India will likely tear down trade barriers for Nepalese exports to reduce the trade deficit.

According to well placed officials, an agreement could be signed in Delhi next month during Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba's visit after the Inter-Governmental Committee which is to meet shortly works out the draft agreement.

A major reason for Mukherjee's visit is to prepare the ground work for Deuba's official visit to India — his first since assuming power in September last year.

The snag in the water resources talk, aside from being the reason for the cancellation of Mukherjee's return trip, also illustrates just how vexing and complicated the issue is for both countries.

The talks have mainly focused on Mahakali River on which India wants an "umbrella package". Nepal, on the other hand, is pitching out for a project by project agreement which also includes renegotiating the Tanakpur Treaty signed by former Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala in 1992.

Nepal: Indian Minister Stresses Reduction in Trade 'Obstacles'

BK2901150696 Kathmandu THE KATHMANDU POST in English 29 Jan 96

[Report by "a POST reporter" — received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kathmandu, Jan 28 — The Indian Foreign Minister, Pranab Mukherjee assured Nepalese business and industry sector on Saturday that the remaining obstacles in trade between two countries will come down gradually.

During a reception programme organised by the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry [FNCCI] in honour of the visiting Indian Foreign Minister, he also suggested Nepalese entrepreneurs to increase their production. Asking Nepal to go for industrialization, Mukherjee said, "We are studying and trying to solve the obstacles for Nepalese goods to enter the Indian market."

Mukherjee admitted that the ever growing trade imbalance in favor of India was a serious issue. He said that Nepal could increase its production with more joint ventures between the two countries.

All the suggestions that will be presented by Indo-Nepal working committee to end obstacles between the two countries, will be implemented, the Indian foreign minister assured the business sector.

While mentioning Nepal's version of the inconvenience to reach Radhikapur port of Bangladesh, Mukherjee said that India was willing to provide another port, "for which Indian officials are busy in home works."

According to Mukherjee, the Bombay and Kandala ports were addition to Calcutta port. "Nepal may not use them if they are inconvenient," he said.

Mukherjee said that there should be an umbrella agreement between these two countries to use Nepal's water resources for the benefit of both, and to encourage investors.

South Asia, according to Mukherjee, has a potential to rise as a big market. He also added that with the enforcement of SAPTA (South Asian Preferential Trade Agreement) the trade between SAARC [South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation] countries will be more easy.

Speaking on the same occasion president of FNCCI Padma Jyoti said that investors of both the countries didn't have enough confidence to invest in the other country.

Explaining the problems Nepalese businessmen face in the Calcutta port Jyoti said that a trade route to Bangladesh via Phulbari of India was easier and necessary for Nepal.

Indian Ambassador to Nepal, K V Rajan said that the Federations of both the countries and media should play a role to boost the confidence of Indian investors to invest in Nepal.

The president of Nepal India Chamber of Commerce, Prabhakar Sumsher JBR [Jang Bahadur Rana — Nepalese title] said that in the present competitive world, Indian investment and employment opportunities were vital for Nepal.

Nepal: 'Roadblock' in Water Sharing Talks With India Examined

BK2901150896 Kathmandu THE KATHMANDU POST in English 29 Jan 96

[Report by Suman Pradhan — received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kathmandu, Jan 28 — Nepal-India talks on sharing of water resources ran into a roadblock on the question of whether to work out a new agreement on Tanakpur [hydroelectric project] as Nepal insisted, or to hammer out an "umbrella agreement" as was the line taken by India, officials who participated in the negotiations told The Kathmandu Post late Sunday.

According to a top Water Resources Ministry official, Sunday's negotiations chiefly got bogged down on Tanakpur on which Nepal is now seeking a completely new treaty that reflects the all-party consensus reached here Friday.

If all goes well, and if the Indian delegation decides to stay long enough, a new treaty on Tanakpur could be signed here on Monday, say officials.

Speaker of House of Representatives Ram Chandra Paudel said, the all-party consensus reached Friday directs His Majesty's Government to extract more concessions from India on Tanakpur by urging the southern neighbour to sign a new treaty.

"If such a treaty is signed with India, it can now be easily ratified by parliament", Paudel said. The old Tanakpur Treaty is yet to be ratified by parliament.

"Nepal is now pitching for 3-4 times the amount of power and double the amount of water which India was supposed to grant under the old Tanakpur Treaty signed during former Prime Minister GP Koirala's 1992 India visit", the Water Resources Ministry official who participated in Sunday's talks, said.

"Since Nepal has provided land to build the afflux bund [dam] at Tanakpur, India should give us more benefits than it has promised", he said.

Government officials say, since the 1992 Tanakpur Treaty is not under discussion in parliament and is only a political issue outside the legislature, there should not be any problems in hammering out a new Tanakpur treaty.

India, on the other hand, is more interested in reaching an all encompassing agreement — "umbrella agreement" — on the Mahakali River in far-west Nepal. The Tanakpur barrage and Pancheswore project both are in the Mahakali river.

The Water Resources Ministry official said that India stood fast on arriving at an "umbrella agreement" on Mahakali under which a general principle agreement would be signed on the modalities of power purchase by India.

"The general power purchasing agreement would lay down the modalities for all future power purchase by India generated by Mahakali river, including Tanakpur and Pancheswore", the official said. India is the eventual buyer of any surplus power generated by Nepal.

However, the Nepalese position is that any umbrella agreement on Mahakali should also incorporate the principle of equal cost-benefit sharing by Nepal in future projects.

The all-party consensus is quite clear on this, asking the government to demand 50 percent of benefits for bearing half the costs of any future project on Mahakali. The Indian side however balked at this demand during negotiations.

As things now stand, Nepal and India could sign either a new Tanakpur treaty or "umbrella agreement" on Monday before the Indian delegation returns home, the high-ranking Water Resources Ministry official said.

"If a treaty on Tanakpur is signed tomorrow, the umbrella agreement could be signed during Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba's visit to Delhi next month and vice versa", he said.

Meanwhile, Minister of Water Resources Pashupati SJB Rana told The Kathmandu Post that the Indian side had shown considerable understanding towards Nepal's position during the negotiations. "The Indian response is because of the all-party consensus on water resources reached recently", he said.

Nepal: Agreement Reached With India on Water Projects

BK2901163596 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 1530 GMT 29 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] India and Nepal have entered into a treaty for development of the Maha Kali River, including Sharda and Tanakpur barrages, and the Pancheswore project. The multipurpose project will generate 2,000 megawatts of power, which will go up to 4,000 megawatts in phases. It will be completed in eight years and is estimated to cost 20,000 crore rupees.

According to a joint press release issued in Kathmandu this evening at the end of the external affairs minister's visit to Nepal, India agreed to give more benefits to Nepal from the Tanakpur project as part of the treaty. Nepal is to get 70 million units of power instead of 20 million units and 300 [figure as heard] cusecs of water in the dry season from the Tanakpur project.

Nepal: India Said To Send 'Clear Signal' With Arrest of Bhutanese

BK2301141596 Kathmandu THE KATHMANDU POST in English 23 Jan 96

[Article by Suman Pradhan: "India Sends Clear Signal to Nepal of Its Stand on Refugee Issue" — received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kathmandu, Jan 22 — If Nepal was in any doubt about where India's sympathy lay in the long simmering Bhutanese refugee crisis, then the arrests last week of Bhutanese peace marchers by Indian authorities have put those doubts to rest.

The six year long refugee crisis which has soured relations between Nepal and Bhutan took a new turn on January 17 when Indian authorities, citing "good neighborly relations with Bhutan", arrested 150 Bhutanese refugees and 16 Indian human rights activists on Nepal's eastern border with India.

The refugees were on a peace march to Thimpu to press for the release of Tek Nath Rijal, a prominent Bhutanese human rights and democracy activist jailed by the royal Druk regime since 1990.

Political analysts here believe that by arresting the refugees, India has sent a clear signal to Nepal about where it stands in the refugee crisis which has so far eluded all efforts towards finding a peaceful solution.

Though India has in the past repeatedly urged Nepal and Bhutan to work for a bilateral solution to the refugee problem, its moves last week dramatically showed that Indian sympathies lie with the Bhutanese government and not with Nepal, say analysts.

"The Indian move is not a good reflection towards Nepal. For the first time India has openly come out with a stand which is primarily the continuation of its old policies on the refugee issue", Sridhar Khatri, a professor of political science at Tribuvan University says.

The arrests by Indian authorities effectively makes the refugee problem a trilateral issue and not a bilateral one as India has been claiming in the past, says Khatri. "By staging the peace march, the refugees put India on the defensive. It had to take a stand. The refugee problem has now become a trilateral issue", he says.

The latest development has also forced Nepal to seek fresh diplomatic initiatives to solve the refugee problem which has strained Nepal's socio-economic fabric. Nepalese leaders have maintained that a poor country such as Nepal cannot afford to bear the burden of a large refugee population for long.

Six rounds of bilateral talks at the home minister level have failed to yield an agreement on the question of refugee repatriation due to the two sides' differences over the tricky refugee verification process. The talks have remained at a standstill since the sixth round held in Thimpu early last year and Nepal is now demanding the talks be resumed at the Foreign Minister level.

Foreign Minister Prakash Chandra Lohani told The Kathmandu Post that the government had recently sent a letter to the Bhutanese monarch King Jigme Singye Wangchuck urging him to restart bilateral talks at the Foreign Minister level. "We have not received a reply yet but we think the talks could start soon", he said.

While Nepal has not come out with an official reaction to the arrests, Foreign Minister Lohani nevertheless expressed dismay at the Indian action. "Why were the refugees arrested now while trying to return to their country? Why weren't they arrested earlier on Indian territory while fleeing Bhutan", he asks.

According to high ranking Foreign Ministry officials, Lohani is to press for an answer with his Indian counterpart Pranab Mukherjee when the latter arrives here on January 26 on an official visit.

"The arrests is an internal affair of India and we would not like to comment on it", Lohani said when pressed to comment on the Indian action, but added, "if the talks with Bhutan at the foreign minister level also fail to make progress, Nepal could very well go for internationalizing the issue".

The arrests have also come under strong attack from the opposition CPN (UML) [Communist Party of Nepal — United Marxist Leninist] which led the fifth and sixth rounds of Nepal-Bhutan talks when in government last year.

"India has interfered in the internal affairs of Bhutan by stopping Bhutanese refugees from reaching their homeland", UML spokesman and a former minister in the UML government Radha Krishna Mainali said.

"It is not only a violation of human rights of the marchers to stage a peaceful demonstration, but the arrests also signals India's desire to see more Bhutanese of ethnic Nepalese origin to be forced out from Bhutan", he said.

"If the situation remains as such, Nepal will have to internationalize the refugee crisis. The Indian action itself has internationalized the issue. We are the third country for Bhutanese refugees. India, as the second country, should seriously consider resolving the problem", Mainali emphasized.

Mainali's remarks are widely held by most Nepalis who think the refugee problem cannot be solved without Indian involvement through whose territory the refugees have to travel to enter Nepal. Bhutan's intransigence on the issue, many here believe, is at the prodding of India which effectively oversees the running of Bhutan's foreign and defense policies, a right given to India by the Indo- Bhutan Treaty of 1949.

Since late 1989 when the first influx of Bhutanese refugees started streaming into Nepal citing persecution at the hands of Bhutan's royal regime for demanding ethnic, political and human rights, their ranks have swollen to more than 100,000.

Bhutan however maintains that the refugees are "economic migrants" who left the country voluntarily.

Most of the refugees live in eight camps run by UNHCR along Nepal's eastern border with India. Few have managed to mingle in Nepalese society snatching away scarce jobs from local villagers.

While internationalizing the refugee issue is an attractive option to Nepalese leaders, political analysts such as Khatri caution against the move. "Nepal should explore other channels before going to that extreme which can only antagonize India and prolong the stalemate", says Khatri. "Both Nepal and Bhutan have a common interest to see the issue settled as soon as possible, and as such a bilateral solution would be the best option".

"To absorb 100,000 refugees may not be a problem to Nepal in the long run, but it will be a major problem for Bhutan who will have to bear with a strong democratic movement from outside its borders", Khatri adds.

That is already happening as the recent peace march suggests. Disgusted by inconclusive rounds of bilateral talks which have done nothing to solve the problem, Bhutanese refugees have been driven to despair, and are now engaged in an energetic campaign to enlist support from Indian political leaders and citizens.

Last month, a grouping of various Bhutanese political organizations in exile held a widely attended seminar in West Bengal state of India which borders Bhutan drawing support from Indian political and human rights activists.

Pakistan

Pakistani Official: Prithvi Missile To 'Transform' Military Balance

BK2801083796 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Overseas Service in English 0800 GMT 28 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Senate was told this morning that development, production, and deployment of Pakistan-specific Prithvi missile by India will qualitatively transform the military balance in the region and Pakistan will be justified in considering countermeasures to safeguard its own security. Making a statement in the house, the minister of state for law and parliamentary affairs, Mian Raza Rabbani, said test firing of Prithvi missile marks a step toward escalation of tension in South Asia. He said by going ahead with the test firing of the missile, the Indians have demonstrated to the world their total disregard of voices of reason and moderation that have called for improving the security situation in the region. The minister said Pakistan has already put forward a proposal for enforcement of zero missile regime in South Asia. Such a regime, he said, would be in the interest of peace and stability of the whole region.

Earlier, rising on a point of order, Mr. Manzoor Ahmad Gichki, expressed deep concern over this development which is a threat to the peace and stability of the region. The leader of the opposition in the house, Raja Mohammad Zafarul Haq, pointed out that India has defied international public opinion on its nuclear weapon and missile programs, but regrettably, Pakistan has been facing unilateral pressure. He said in the context of regional situation, Pakistan has every right to take necessary steps to strengthen its security.

Pakistani Envoy to U.S. Comments on Passage of Brown Amendment

BK2701163996 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in English 1600 GMT 27 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] The Brown Amendment relaxing Pressler sanctions on Pakistan has become a law with President Clinton giving his assent. The American Congress earlier passed the Brown Amendment as part of Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill containing the amendment. The amendment facilitates release of $368 million worth of U.S. arms to Pakistan which were embargoed in 1990 under the Pressler Amendment. The Brown Amendment also lifts all economic and nonmilitary sanctions imposed under the discriminatory Pressler law and opens way for guaranteeing American investment and trade with Pakistan. The painstaking legislative process ended in Washington last night following a compromise between the Clinton administration and Republican majority in the U.S. Congress. [passage omitted]

Pakistan's ambassador to the United States, Dr. Maleeha Lodhi, said the passage of the Brown Amendment marks the culmination of a long and arduous legislative process to uphold the principle of fairness and equity. She said it vindicates Pakistan's principled position on the nuclear issue and opens a new chapter in Pak-U.S. relations by removing undue obstacles.

Political observers say final passage of the Brown Amendment marks a serious set back to Indian attempts to block any relaxation of the Pressler Amendment, which targeted only Pakistan for its nuclear program leaving India free to continue with its weapon-oriented nuclear program.

Pakistani Foreign Secretary Hails 'Final Passage' of Brown Amendment

BK2801081696 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in English 0300 GMT 28 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Pakistan has welcomed the passage of Brown Amendment and the assent given to it by President Clinton. The foreign secretary, Mr. Najmuddin Sheikh, said in Islamabad that the law will further improve Pakistan-U.S. relations. He said the final passage of the Brown Amendment as a law represents a great deal of efforts on part of administration, especially by President Clinton.

In an interview last night, the foreign secretary described the test firing of Prithvi missile by India as a very dangerous development in South Asia. He said securitywise it introduces a qualitatively new situation in the region, which will constrain Pakistan to take necessary security measures. Mr. Najmuddin Sheikh said as in the past they would continue to call on India to work out with Pakistan ways by which the production of such dangerous weapons of mass destruction can be avoided.

Pakistani Minister Welcomes Passage of Brown Amendment

BK2901042496 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in English 0300 GMT 29 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Federal Minister for Law, Justice, and Parliamentary Affairs Professor N.D. Khan has said the passage of the Brown Amendment is an historic achievement of the present government and it would go a long way in strengthening Pak-U.S. relations.

In a statement issued in Islamabad, the minister said the passage of the Brown Amendment is indeed a tribute to the successful leadership of the prime minister. Professor N.D. Khan observed that the improving Pak-U.S. relations has become a source of anxiety for India and it is now constantly engaged in negative and militant tactics. Citing the rocket attack on forward Kahuta and the experiment of Prithvi missile, the minister said these incidents were rightful cause of alarm for Pakistan and the world community. He said the Indian designs had already been frustrated by the Kashmiri freedom fighters and India was now resorting to negative militant tactics to harass the Kashmiris even in Azad Kashmir.

The chairman, Privatization Commission, Syed Nabil Kamar, in a statement said the passage of Brown Amendment is a great victory of successful foreign policy pursued by the present government. He said approval of Brown law by President Clinton has also vindicated the Pakistan's principled stand on nuclear issue.

Pakistani Senators Affirm Support for Kashmiris, National Defense

BK2901120096 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in English 1100 GMT 29 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Leaders of all political parties and groups in the Senate today declared that the entire nation is united on the issue of national security and support to Kashmiri people. They further declared that they would observe the 5th of next month as the day of solidarity with the struggling people of Kashmir.

The political leaders made this declaration during a short debate through points of order when Qazi Hussain Ahmad referred to the firing of rockets on forward Kahuta by India. He said that a clear message should go to India and the Kashmiris that the whole nation was untied as far as the questions of national security and defense and Kashmir were concerned. He said the enemy would not be allowed to take advantage of our internal political differences.

The leader of the house, Malik Mohammad Qasim, said on the day of solidarity with the Kashmiris, rallies would be held in their support. The leader of the opposition, Raja Mohammad Zafarul Haq, said there are no two opinions in Pakistan on Kashmir issue and national defense. He said this message should go to the Kashmiri people and the whole world — that Pakistan will continue its support to the brave Kashmiris till they achieve their goal.

The AJK [Azad Jammu and Kashmir] prime minister, Sardar Mohammad Abdul Qayyum Khan, has said Pakistan has exercised utmost restraint on persistent provocative act by India at control line, especially after rocket attacks at a mosque in Kahuta on Friday. Addressing a symposium at Azad Kashmir radio in Muzaffarabad today, he said the recent attack by the Indian Army at forward Kahuta on the civilian population could harm peace in the region. He said Pakistan has been endeavoring and utilizing all its channels to resolve Kashmir dispute in a peaceful manner.

Official Sources View Alleged Killing of 5 Pakistanis

BK2601144596 Islamabad PTV Television Network in English 1400 GMT 26 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Official sources in Islamabad have said that the killing of five alleged Pakistani nationals at the Line of Control is part of the usual fabrication of Indian intelligence agencies to deflect world attention from the Kashmiris protest on India's Republic Day. Sources said it seems to have been fabricated to divert international attention from the Black Day being observed by the Kashmiri people throughout occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

The Indian Border Security Force's officials have said they shot dead five alleged Pakistani nationals at the Line of Control after they sneaked into the held valley early today.

Sri Lanka

Sri Lankan Minister: No 'Special Privileges' in Devolution Package

BK2901133796 Colombo Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation International Service in English 1045 GMT 29 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The government's devolution plans do not include any special privileges for the northern and eastern provinces, Justice and Constitutional Affairs Minister Professor G.L. Peiris said on Friday [26 January]. Addressing a gathering of Bhikkus [monks] at a seminar on the devolution of power held at the BMICH [Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall], Professor Peiris said that fears of separation from the union were unfounded since all powers regarding the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the country will be vested with the center. Indeed, devolution is essential to preserve the country's territorial integrity. Otherwise the country may break up, the minister added. He also said a political solution must be pursued while continuing military initiative. The devolution proposals will form the basis of the political solution, but their purpose is not confined to that alone. Devolution will help provinces solve their problems speedily. There is nothing to fear. Devolution is democracy at its best, he added.

Disputes Aggravated Between LTTE Cadres, Jaffna Civilians

BK3001123596 Colombo Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation International Service in English 1045 GMT 30 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Disputes between LTTE [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam] cadres and the civilians of Jaffna, whom they have forcibly detained, have aggravated. Reports from the north attribute this to several factors. The most prominent is strict regulations enacted by the LTTE for these civilians. Another reason is the LTTE strategy of forcibly recruiting children of the north into their movement. As a result, they have decided not to send their children to schools in the Kilinochchi area.

Reports from Kilinochchi say that, although there are many children in primary classes, there is only a handful in higher grades. The Jaffna civilians are worried about the education of their children. They are of the view that it is mainly due to 'their displacement by the LTTE in the wake of the Operation Riviresa. The LTTE had promised to provide them with all basic facilities; however, it is now not in a position to fulfill this promise. They are now regrouping to return to their homes, ignoring orders given by the LTTE. So far, nearly 4,000 have left Kilinochchi to areas in the north with the aim of resettling in their home towns.

LTTE Reportedly Disrupts Relief Operations in Kilinochchi

BK2901133696 Colombo Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation International Service in English 1045 GMT 29 Jan 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Kilinochchi District secretary says the relief activities for Tamil civilians have been disrupted due to the action of the LTTE [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam]. Tamils residing permanently in the district and displaced persons are facing great difficulties due to this reason. Kilinochchi District Secretary Thillai Natarajan said that the whole population in the district was around 419,614 up to 10 January. The number of permanent residents in the district is 185,000. Others have been forcibly settled by the LTTE. He added that several problems have cropped up due to the increase in population in the area. However, civilians will be provided with relief assistance and the quantity of food and other essential items provided to them monthly has been increased. But the civilians are still being affected as the LTTE is preventing the distribution of food in the area.

Meanwhile, relief activities will be carried out in Vavuniya, Mannar, and Kilinochchi with the supervision of the security forces.

LTTE Report Details Offensive in Manal Aru District

BK2901164496 (Internet) Tamil Eelam News WWW in Tamil 23 Jan 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam [LTTE] launched a simultaneous attack on army fortifications located at the Parakramapuram military camp site in Manal Aru District, destroying all of them. The special LTTE contingent's ambush occurred at 0100 on 22 January, and Sri Lankan troops fled, leaving behind their weapons. The LTTE pursued the fleeing troops and attacked them. Four soldiers and three home guards were killed during this encounter. The troops who rushed to their rescue on motorcycles could not face the Tiger onslaught and escaped after abandoning their motorcycles. The LTTE seized these motorcycles and destroyed them.

The LTTE, which captured the fortifications within 10 minutes of their assault, remained in control of them for about an hour. The LTTE destroyed the fortifications after removing the weapons. It should be noted that the above fortifications were set up to provide security to the Sinhalese people settled there. On the LTTE's side, Captain Anbukkiniyan—alias Vignarasa Rajmanoharan—from Thirumalai embraced martyrdom in this successful ambush.

Captain Navarasan—alias Mahalingam Gajendran—from Vavuniya embraced martyrdom during the direct confrontation with Sri Lankan troops in Wanni last Saturday. We pay tribute to our national heroes who sacrificed their lives in the holy war to liberate our motherland from our enemies.

Meanwhile, the LTTE launched surprise attacks on Sri Lankan troops deployed in Chunnakam and Kantarodai on 21 and 22 January. These surprise attacks were carried out in Chunnakam at about 1700 on 21 January and in Kantarodai at about 0530 on 22 January. There is no report about the losses suffered by the Sri Lankan side.

There are doubts regarding the identity of the pilot who manned the Russian-built helicopter carrying 39 people that was shot down by the LTTE yesterday. The Sri Lankan Government, which provided details about the 37 people killed, did not provide any clues about the remaining two people. This has created doubts in the minds of many people. It is obvious that Air Force pilots hesitate to fly to the north because of the continuous attacks by the LTTE on Air Force planes. Reports say that, under these circumstances, the Sri Lankan Government has hired some pilots from abroad. The lieutenant commander who was killed in yesterday's attack is said to be the father of the pilot who manned the aircraft that was downed in Nircolombo [place name as transliterated] last September.

Meanwhile, top Sri Lankan Government circles are worried about the increased attacks being carried out by the LTTE in the north and east. Colombo sources report that those in leadership are apprehensive that the illusion they have created among the Sinhalese people about the victory in Jaffna might dissipate. It has been learned that senior officials from the defense sectors met and discussed the current situation three times during the past two days.

The body of a fisherman, who went missing in the sea during an attack by Sri Lankan troops in Matalan a few days ago, was recovered yesterday.

The Sri Lankan Air Force carried out its act of terrorism on civilian settlements in Silavatturai in Mannar District. Two civilians were injured in the brutal attack. A number of houses and huts have been damaged.

The thirst of the LTTE is for the motherland of Tamil Eelam. Thanks.

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